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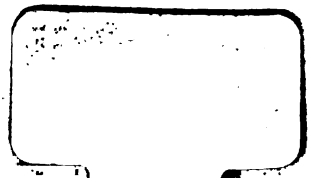

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THREE LOVING LADIES

By

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THREE LOVING LADIES

CHAPTER I

MESSRS. BURRIDGE and Co's pantechnicons bumped majestically along the streets of Millport early in the morning. Mud seemed to be unaccountably falling from the sky through a close filter of smoke draped high above the town; for although there was no fog, the great stucco offices on either side of the street were slimy with coffee-coloured moisture, and the people who hurried along looked cold and slippery, like panic-stricken snails compelled to leave their shelters. The same mysterious mud oozed also from below the paving stones, and would continue to ooze long after the sun had penetrated the smoke filter and made the houses and the pedestrians comparatively dry.

Millport is one of the largest cities of the empire, and one of the richest. I have never heard of anyone living there for choice, or for any reason but an alleged opportunity for making money. Those who settle there are in the habit of transplanting themselves at regular intervals; removing to a house further away from the premises to which the breadwinner carries a neat bag or attaché case every weekday morning, between eight and ten. The removals mark a rise in the social scale, and are celebrated by new responsibilities, in the addition

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of servants, greenhouses, garages and acres of ground requiring " upkeep." The heights of Elysium are, in the end, reached by train. Between the main railway station and the outskirts of wealth, lie nearly two miles of shops, and a professional quarter where the inner darkness of blocks and terraces shades into the dim glory of semi-detached houses. The next stage of grandeur is seen in the increase of laurel bushes and gravel paths round each semi-detached pair. When the flower-beds in front, and the tennis lawns at the back, reach a certain standard of importance they flow into each other by connecting paths between the buildings, and each house then stands alone, detached, in the full radiance of encircling " grounds."

It was nearly ten o'clock before Messrs. Burridge's stately pantechnicons reached their destination, a large, square, cinnamon-coloured house, standing in about two acres of ground on the borders of Millport's largest and most satisfactory park. General Fulton, who had taken a five years' lease of it, wondered many times what had induced him to leave his comfortable little house in Westminster. He had meant to retire from the army at the end of the war, and had been turning over in his mind many agreeable plans for the future, when he was offered the command of a military district of which Millport was the centre. In a rash moment he confided the offer to his wife, hoping for some entertainment from her habit of commenting seriously on matters which he regarded as trifling. To his surprise and disgust, she surpassed his expectation, and pointed out unanswerable reasons why the command must be accepted. She confronted him

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with facts about his income, which had hitherto been sufficient. But he neither read the papers nor practised arithmetic, and, as she observed at the end of the argument, "seemed to suppose that girls' clothes grew on their backs." His reply to this last shot produced a silence which he knew to be ominous of a settled programme; he knew that he had thrown away his last chance by "saying something coarse," and that any further excuses would be flung unregarded into the flame of her spiritual nature (a possession which is supposed by women who boast of it, to guarantee also a sound business judgment). He appealed in vain to his daughters Evangeline and Teresa. Evangeline said carelessly, "Oh, do let's, father," and left the room to post a letter. She informed the maid whom she passed on the stairs that, "we are all going to Millport, and isn't it fun?" Teresa ran her fingers through her untidy hair, done up for the first time, and said, "If it is by the sea couldn't we have a cottage?"

General Fulton, avoiding his wife's eye, mixed himself a whisky and soda. It was the only way to drown his bitter regret at having ever mentioned the appointment. "You'll never get another house as nice as this," he suggested feebly. "I've been to Millport once, and it's a filthy place. There was a great black church opposite the hotel, and drunken old women poking stale fish about." Teresa shivered, but said nothing.

"I don't suppose those poor old women ever thought of drinking until they were taught by their husbands," said Mrs. Fulton, glancing at the tumbler he held, but she added hurriedly, before he had time to protest, "and I believe it is perfectly necessary

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to poke fish before you can tell whether it is fresh or not. You would see that kind of thing in any town you went to, Cyril. And, anyhow, one doesn't live down there. Father and mother lived in Millport for years, and I know father said everyone lived right out."

"Well, I don't think I want the thing," he said bravely. "I am not going to take it." He gathered up his morning's correspondence. "I'm out to lunch, Sue."

"Do you mind paying some money into the bank for me as you go past?" she said gently. "The last quarter hasn't been nearly enough. I suppose it is the income tax and the price of everything."

General Fulton looked at her in exasperated admiration as she sat there, quietly warming her toes in front of the fire, meditative and candid; the typical gentle wife who patiently adds up the problems of life for her husband, and leaves his wisdom to unravel the answer.

"Why didn't you say at the beginning that we were in debt?" he asked.

"I don't know that we are, dear," she said, looking at him in perfect innocence. "I only said that I couldn't manage on what you gave me. I don't know what your shares come to; it is all Greek to me."

"Well, have it your own way, damn it," returned her husband. "Perhaps you've inherited business instincts, and they always go with turpitude."

"I wish you would think a little of the children sometimes," she said, glancing at Teresa who sat lost in thought by the window, hearing what they

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said, and trying in vain to understand what the argument really meant.

"Do you want to go to Millport, Dicky?" her father asked kindly.

"I don't know," she said. "It is on the sea, isn't it?"

"It's on shrimps," he replied, "and docks—things that open and shut at you—and it is as black as night, and people walk about with bread under their arms. Well, goodbye, dear; your mother says we're going, and she knows—she cares—God bless her." He kissed Teresa affectionately, and left the room.

And so, the course of time showed Messrs. Burridge's pantechnicons casting the contents of Cyril's happy little home into the ornate cinnamon jaws of a house that he said made him think somehow of the late Prince Albert. "The sort of thing he'd have built for the head gamekeeper, Sue," he remarked after lunch on their first day there. "And the park is the very thing for 'interments'; you could see them winding all the way from end to end. I hope it will come up to your expectations in the matter of wealthy consorts for the girls; or is that not part of the scheme?"

"I don't like joking about marriage, Cyril, you know that," she replied, "it may mean so much to a girl." She sighed. She had been very beautiful twenty years before, and would have been so still, but for the fact that years of quiet enjoyment of her own skill in getting what she wanted, and a conscious superiority over people who "worried about what couldn't be helped" had obliterated the delicate lines of her face, and given to the fleeting dimple,

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which used to be the despair and delight of her lovers, the coarser appearance of a crease in a satin cushion.

"It may mean something to her partner, too, you come to that," returned Cyril. "It will to Evangeline's, I should think. I wouldn't be in his shoes for something. She's like you, Sue, in some ways; with all the naughty little point of the story left out. I never knew such a rough rider in the field of conversation. She'd never have been able to stuff me with the stories you did about the injury to your pure young mind when I kissed you. Lord! think of it!"

Mrs. Fulton kept a dignified silence for a minute or two, and then sighed again, as if to waft away the possibility of looking at Nature's beauties with a man who had been blind from birth. "How did you like the people you met to-day?" she asked.

"Oh, some of them weren't bad. Hatton will be here to breakfast. He'll always be about the place, so I hope you'll like him; he's my A.D.C. And all their wives will be round soon, I suppose, to pay their respects. Hatton hasn't got one I'm glad to say; though I daresay he'll be as preoccupied with the subject as if he had. I wish I had gone into the Navy instead of the Army."

"Why?" she asked, though she knew that the drift of what he was going to say would be somehow unflattering to herself.

"Because one's subordinates have always got a neat woman in lodgings somewhere, and they just clear off in their spare time and keep themselves employed until one meets them again. Their wives

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don't litter about the place and fight with each other."

"I don't know how any woman can care to be a mere tool like that," she replied. "It must make them so one-sided."

"Yes," he said, "but think of the feelings of the happy man who can say, 'This little side is all for me,' and knows that she has no other to give to one who might like to have it. Why, it would make life a different thing. Where are the girls, by the way?"

"I think they are arranging their rooms and showing the servants where to put things. They seem to be the most curious creatures that we have got; but it was so difficult to find well trained ones. They call me 'Mrs. Fulton,' and tell me what they have been accustomed to. I think I shall engage a housekeeper, Cyril. I do hate explaining, and these creatures want to argue about everything."

"Can't the girls do it?" he asked.

"Oh no; they have other things to do. Besides, Evangeline turns everything upside down. I had the greatest difficulty in getting the dining-room table put where I wanted it. Of course I want the dears to have everything as they like, but I do wish sometimes they would be a little more help."

"Oh, well, we managed all right in the old place."

"Yes, but then these servants won't do nearly so much," she complained, "and they have more to do as it is. I must say I think it is only right that we should consider them more than we used to do. It must be so dreadful to work all day. I am sure that new girl Strickland would be more satisfied and likely to stop if you kept your room tidier, Cyril."

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Evangeline poked her head round the door. "Father," she asked, "can I leave your books and have a lesson on the car from that magnificent Fitz-Augustus person of yours? He says he is going some messages for you, and he wouldn't mind——"

"Anything you like," said her father, "so long as I don't know anything about it; you can't drive without a licence. Also, if you'll make Dicky go for a walk with me. I must go into the town, and I must have some exercise, and I won't walk alone."

. . . . .

"I don't think we'll do that business after all," he said as he left the house with Teresa half an hour later. "It only means a small additional coolness to the heels of an unknown gentleman in an office. They'll warm up again to-morrow, like a lodging house chop. You've never lived in lodgings have you?"

"No, never."

"Well, never do. When I lived in lodgings and used to be a bit off colour in the morning I used to see ornaments about everywhere. I remember I once saw a china dog, with a basket of forget-me-nots in its mouth, on the Colonel's table in the middle of his papers, and I'm hanged if I know to this day whether it was a real one or not. I could never make up my mind about it, though it gave me such a turn that I went round to the chemist and got something."

"What else," asked Teresa. "That's lovely."

"Oh, I don't remember anything special; but they never clean the mustard pot in those places—that was another thing. They've no sense. And I never could find the matches. They'd be at the

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bottom of a vase with dried grass in it, or that kind of thing. I think this ought to take us down to the docks. Would you like to see them ? "

" Yes, awfully," she agreed, and they walked some way in silence. " They are nicer houses down here if they weren't so dirty, aren't they ? " she said presently, looking up at the windows as they passed along a street to which some bygone architect had bequeathed an indestructible dignity. Their restful proportions and large windows gave her a sudden sense of relief after the turrets and variegated excrescences, coloured bricks disposed in geometrical patterns, and twisted ironwork that adhered to the semi-detached quarter they had passed through.

" Yes," said her father. " I expect all the old turpitudes—pious founders and all that—lived down here. Our place was probably a marsh or a coal mine or something, till the influence of the Late Lamented overtook it. A man I met yesterday was talking about slaves. They were up to all sorts of games down at their warehouses. The negro still flourishes apparently," he added, as a group of black men passed them and turned down a narrow street, where tousled women stood at their doors, and children screamed in the gutter. They crossed over a thoroughfare at which main streets intersected one another, and accommodation for sailors was advertised by mission rooms, clubs, public houses, slop shops, and reiterated offers of beds. Blocks of shops, shipping bureaus and warehouses split up further on into single gigantic buildings, the offices of the state and of great trading companies, full as beehives, and glittering with prosperity ; all

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the organism of a seaport in touch with continents. The sea air was fresh in their faces.

"That's good," said Cyril. "We'll go and hang about."

They went precariously down a sloping bridge, slippery with mud from the feet of a stream of hurrying workers intent on their home affairs which lay on the other side of the river, and stood by a line of iron chains that stretched indefinitely along the gently heaving planks of the stage to which the ferry boats were moored. A red sun hung above the chimneys on the opposite side in a slight fog that was creeping up the river, and, from mysterious shapes behind this veil, hooters, syrens and clanging bells answered one another in warnings to the capering atoms of whom the drowning of even one would affect, in some degree, the life of the city.

"Do you know," said Teresa presently, "that I haven't seen a single person—what we used to call 'person'—since we came out; nothing but the kind of people who make crowds."

"That's because you don't know them," said Cyril. "I saw a millionaire get off the boat a minute ago, 'walking quite unaffectedly,' as the newspapers say."

"No, but the dressed people," said Teresa, "you know what I mean. Where are they?"

"My dear, how should I know?" he replied carelessly. "That's what I tried to explain to your mother before we came; I thought it would put her off. But I shouldn't be in the least surprised if she took up philanthropy."

"Do you mean that she'd go on committees?" Teresa asked awestruck.

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"She might quite well, and if I were the committee I should just tell her what I wanted done, and leave her to do it her own way. You'd find it would work out in the end."

"But those kind of people are generally so interfering," said Teresa. "Mother is not."

"No, but she is a master of strategy," said Cyril. "I used to read about Napoleon when we were taught strategy. Did you ever hear of his battles?"

"You mean Waterloo?" she asked.

"Yes, but that didn't come off. His great success was before then. She may meet her Wellington on the playing fields of Millport for all you know. We shall see. Let's go back to tea. Have a taxi?"

"No, let's go on the top of a tram," said Teresa. "I want to have that rod thing arranged over my head. Did you see the conductor running round with a string and hooking the little wheel on at the back?"

"Well, I don't mind," he conceded, "but the smell will knock you down."

"What smell?" asked Teresa.

"Demos, a crowd," he replied, as they made their slow progress between the jostling workers who still poured uninterruptedly across the bridge, "see also 'Demosthenes' and 'demon'—and 'demi-monde'," he added reflectively, as a whiff of strong scent struck him from a girl with a sharp elbow.

"What a fuss you make about smells and things," she said. "They're all life. They mean all sorts of things."

"Well, they don't mean anything I want," he grumbled. "I believe everybody in this damned

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place wears fish next the skin." This was said with profound disgust as they took their places on a little seat at the top of the tram staircase, and other swarms of people with pale, serious faces and drab clothing pushed past his knees to the glass shelter beyond. The windows became fogged with human breath and clouds of cheap tobacco, and as the sun disappeared in the drifting fog from the river, the mud began to filter down once more on to the roofs, and to ooze up from under the stones of the pavement. The car swayed under its heavy load, with occasional grinding squeals, stopping every few hundred yards to take up new burdens in place of those who had reached their destination. Teresa watched the squalid forms and weary faces with a new-born ecstasy. Some veiled desire, a love for something unknown, which had led her in pursuit for as long as she could remember, had stopped and shown itself to her for a moment. Then it fled again from her reach.

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CHAPTER II

ONE great source of mental nourishment that Evangeline relied on at this time was the Press. Two thirds of the things she thought about each day came from the newspapers, plain or illustrated, but not political; that is to say, not political beyond striking headlines and a short—very short—leading article. Her mind made curious pictures of these scraps of state information. Perhaps the best way of describing what she thought Parliament is, and does, is to imagine oneself very agile, very kind, very interested, perched inside the roof of an immense building, looking down on hundreds of elderly gentlemen all of one type, but some with familiar faces. We, from our perch, know that each of them has gone through a period of anxiety and expense, connected with loss of voice and terrible boredom of his supporters, who have to sit behind him on uncomfortable chairs and wish he would pull his coat down at the back before speaking. This period of trial has ended in an election—ribbon and scratch meals—and then he got a "seat" here on something-or-other benches (Evangeline had been at school, but she wasn't in the serious lot, at least, not the brainy serious. Her set used only to discuss things like immortality when they felt really friendly). Once on these "benches" men become political, and lose considerably in spiritual value, except when

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they call out the army and navy. Otherwise they spend their time henceforth in committing blunders (the meat blunder, the wool blunder, the tax blunder, the housing blunder, etc.), to the perpetual inconvenience of the public, until something happens to the Cabinet and a lot of well-known people who were IN become OUT, and it makes no difference at all, except as a frail raft for the drowning in conversation. But the rest of the paper is worth reading; there are things to interest everybody. The eccentric behaviour of criminals, landladies and leaders of society; adventures, and reports of shipwrecks and calves with two tails. On the last page there is often expert advice on physical fitness and the complexion.

On the morning following Teresa's walk to the docks with her father Evangeline began to try the effects of the juice of an orange accompanied by half an hour's deep breathing before breakfast. She had walked and deep breathed in the park, and returned full of exhilaration from the sight of the dewy grass, young tulips pushing through the heavy dun soil and the song of birds in smoke-laden trees and bushes that were budding as irrepressibly as herself. She stood on the edge of a pond and watched the ducks performing an ecstatic toilet. Their gutteral sounds of pleasure and the grinding of distant tram wheels were the only sounds besides the chorus of chirping. The only people she met were a policeman on one side of the pond, and a dressmaker's assistant on the other, and she felt that God was the friend of both as of the ducks and the Spring; they were not at all in the way. When she arrived at home a man in military uniform was

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standing on the doorstep. He was young and had the face of a reformer.

"Good morning," she said. "Are you coming in?"

"Please," he answered gravely, and said no more, while she fitted her latchkey. She led the way into the dining-room, where breakfast was laid, and looked vaguely round.

"Shall I tell my father you're here?" she asked hesitatingly, and then, with sudden uncontrollable interest, "are you the man that hasn't got a wife?"

He started and frowned. He was embarrassed, and felt that the question was not one that should have been asked by a stranger. "No, I am not married," he snapped.

"Is your name Hatton?" she asked next.

"Yes."

"Oh, then Father told us about you. Do you want to see him?"

"Very much," said Captain Hatton with emphasis.

"I'll fetch him," she said, "but do sit down and be comfortable." She went out and called, "Father! Father!" at the bottom of the stairs. "Father! Oh, drat him! I believe he is still in the bath." Captain Hatton, erect on the hearth-rug in front of the door she had left open, heard, and winced.

"Dick—y! Dick—y!" she called next.

"Oh, do come up, Chips, if you want anything," he heard a small weary voice say upstairs. "Father is in the bath; he'll be out directly."

"Well tell him to hurry up; it's Captain Hatton,"

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said Evangeline, and she plunged back into the dining-room.

"I am afraid my watch must be all wrong," he said, as he glanced round the room in hope of moral support from an accusing clock. "I thought General Fulton said breakfast at half-past eight."

"So it is," said Evangeline. "It is only twenty minutes to nine now. Father won't get up if he has an interesting post. What time do you get up?"

"Oh—er—a quarter to seven usually," he replied.

"A quarter to——? Gracious! Do you mean in the very middle of a minute like that? It seems just as if you said 'up goes the hand of my watch, down goes my leg on the floor.' I couldn't do that. I have to yawn a long time first and then get out by degrees till it gets too cold not to do something about it."

There was silence. Evangeline felt depressed. All her gladness in the awakening spring had gone. "Would you like to look at the paper?" she asked with a sigh. He said, "Thank you," but as he stretched out his hand to take it from her he saw that it was not *Country Life*, but a lady's paper. Doll-like faces with no noses, shameless trousseaux, ridiculous young men in black, scent bottles and wigs met his eye on the open page.

"Er—thanks very much," he said, "I think I'll wait for the morning paper. What time do you get it?"

"I expect it has come," said Evangeline. "The boy generally flings it in at the kitchen window."

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She rang the bell. "Breakfast, please, Strickland, and the paper if it has come," she ordered.

"I was waiting till Mrs. Fulton came down," said the maid severely. Evangeline sighed again. "How obstructive everyone is this morning," she thought, but said aloud, "No, we'll begin please, and anyhow I want the paper."

But neither came and the silence grew heavier. She wanted to rush out of the room; she knew that her hair was untidy and two of her finger nails were grubby owing to having restored a strayed worm to what she thought a safe place on the bank of the pond, where a duck had eaten him at once to her disgust. But she could not move from the sofa where she had taken refuge with her rejected paper. The barrier of Captain Hatton's eye stretched between her and the door and she felt that it might touch her as she ran past; if it did she would have to scream. Suddenly—"A—tish—u!"—a fearful explosion. Captain Hatton had sneezed. There was a dead silence while Evangeline held her breath and dared not look. Then again the awful sound; and again; eight times.

"I beg your pardon," he said when all was quiet again. "Extraordinary how these attacks come on."

The great friendly creature cheered up at once on this crumb of encouragement. "I like sneezing," she said. "It almost takes the place of swearing. You feel better and no harm done to anybody."

"Ah—h'm," he agreed without enthusiasm.

"There's Mother coming," she said thankfully as a gentle rustle was heard in the passage. Susie

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came in in a soft breakfast gown that avoided conclusions with her figure. Her hair was beautifully done and her face delicately cared for. Captain Hatton, though he approved of her evidently careful toilet, took a vague dislike to her because it had not been carried through at the specified time.

"I am so sorry my husband is late," she murmured, "I am afraid we got into bad habits in London. Everything is so late there and the morning is really the loveliest time, isn't it? I remember once being out at six to catch a train and the birds were simply delightful. Do you sing at all?" she inquired, her eyes brimming with sympathetic interest.

"I do occasionally," he admitted, heartily wishing that his chief would come and relieve him.

"I hope we shall often hear you," said Mrs. Fulton. "I always think music is such a happy thing. Evangeline dear, ring the bell."

"I have rung twice," she said.

"Servants are very unpunctual as a race," Mrs. Fulton observed. "I wish they would get up earlier, but I daresay they are often tired like we are." Strickland came in with the hot dishes. "We shall want some more toast, I think, Strickland."

"The fire's not hot enough," answered the maid. "The cook was late this morning."

"Then just run up and make a little at the gas fire in the General's dressing-room," Susie ordered. "Will you help yourself, Captain Hatton."

A few minutes later Cyril entered hurriedly in his dressing-gown. "I say, Sue, what the devil—

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hullo, Hatton, that you?—what the devil did you send that woman to make toast in my room for? I'd nothing but——"

"Cyril dear, never mind," his wife interrupted. "The kitchen fire wasn't quite ready; she won't be a minute."

"Well, I can't go back to dress now," he complained.

"It will teach us to be more punctual to-morrow," said Mrs. Fulton. "We must set them a good example. Dicky ought to be down too."

Teresa came in quietly and shut the door without looking at anyone. She was flushed and seemed preoccupied and had evidently forgotten Evangeline's announcement of a guest. "My hair refuses to go up," she began, turning straight to the sideboard. "I shall do it like some women I saw yesterday. The front was all in tiny plaits and the back—well, it wasn't hairdressing, it was plumbing. You've been pretty hearty with the kedgeree, haven't you?"

"Dicky, darling, I don't think you have seen Captain Hatton," her mother suggested. Teresa turned unconcernedly.

"I am sorry," she apologised. "How do you do? I remember my sister did tell me you were here, but I happened to be thinking at the time and I forgot."

"Please don't bother," he said. He was recovering his temper under the influence of breakfast and the sense of safety that his host brought. "You'll see so much of me, I'm afraid, that I'd rather you did not notice it."

"Don't hope for that, Hatton," put in the

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General. "They'll see everything you do. It's a damned noticing family; except Evangeline and she'll fall over you in the dark every time."

Captain Hatton looked embarrassed and changed the subject. "Are you going to like being here, do you think?" he asked Susie.

"Oh, I think so," she replied. "Of course it is quite different from London, but there must be some nice people. Do you know many people here yet?"

"I have got some friends who live a few miles out," he said. "I have stayed with them for hunting, but I've been out of England for the last three years. We were sent to Germany after the armistice and I came back to go into hospital."

"Oh, dear me, those hospitals!" she sighed. "Shall I ever forget them! I couldn't do any actual nursing, of course, though I should have loved it; but I don't think it was right the way women left their children. But I used to visit the poor boys and wash up. I get such touching letters from them even now. Do you remember young Digby, Cyril?"

"No, I don't, but I could make a fair guess at him. You forget that I was in my little wooden hut at the time and couldn't leave it even for you. I wonder if that beastly woman is out of my room. Dicky—oblige your father. Go and see if she is there, will you? I want to get dressed."

"She is making toast, dear," Mrs. Fulton explained. "You might ask her for it; she won't hear the bell."

Teresa went out and met Strickland in the passage.

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She was dusting the hall. "Can we have the toast, please?" Teresa asked.

"It isn't made," Strickland replied coldly. "I couldn't be spoken to like that. I shall leave at the end of the month. I'm not accustomed to be blasted." Teresa touched her on the shoulder. "Never mind Father," she said. "We none of us do. He's most affectionate really. Forget the toast; I'll tell them." She went back into the dining-room and shut the door. Mrs. Fulton was offering dainty morsels of sentiment about hospitals to Captain Hatton, who disposed of them one by one with the indifference a sea lion shows about the quality of the fish thrown into its mouth. Teresa sat down by her father and said in a low voice, "You mustn't swear at the maids, you know. Strickland is very angry and was going to go, but I told her you are all right. I don't know if she will recover, but you must remember that you don't have the trouble of going to registry offices."

"What an eternal curse women's feelings are," he grumbled as he pulled out a cigarette case. "I believe they grow fat on them."

"But then, you see, your men have none at all," she explained, "which is as bad the other way, because you can't make them hear except by blasting and all those kinds of words that mean nothing."

"But they do mean something," argued her aggrieved father. "They mean, 'You've damn well got to do it and look sharp.'"

"Yes, but if you say to a woman, 'Be quick Pansy dear,' she does it just as well."

Cyril roared with laughter. "Here, Hatton"

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he said, "do you know what you've got to say to the mess sergeant the next time he keeps you waiting? 'Be quick, Pansy dear!' Will you try it first or shall I?" Captain Hatton laughed.

"What is Dicky saying?" asked Mrs. Fulton indulgently.

"Explaining the art of commanding those of unripe station," said the General. "Come on to my room, Hatton, and I'll leave you there while I get some clothes on—if they're not all over toast and tears," he added resentfully.

"Good heavens! What a man!" Evangeline exclaimed when the door shut behind them. "He's like an umbrella."

"Oh, I think he's charming," said her mother. "So much tact, and most interesting, I should think, when one gets to know him. Ring the bell, Dicky dear, and when she comes to clear away tell her I shall be in my sitting-room if she wants me."

"What are we going to do with ourselves every day in this place, Chips?" Teresa asked her sister when they were alone.

"Oh, what we have done before, I suppose," Evangeline answered carelessly. She was reading the paper that had come too late to save Captain Hatton's temper. The Labour Party, she read, were determined to do something which she did not understand, but which foreboded discomfort to everybody including their own supporters. They seemed to do it on purpose, like schoolmistresses, for some end which no reasonable young person desires, even if it could be achieved. Who exactly were the Labour party she wondered? The paper showed

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their photographs; clumsy figures in impossible hats, with impossible wives whose barren heads contrasted grotesquely with the hairiness of their men's faces. She looked over the page. An officer, recently demobilised, had committed suicide owing to the difficulty of maintaining a blue-eyed child, whose portrait was inset below his own. The "night life" of a great city was said to be "glittering with unprecedented extravagance!" A millionaire had made a unique will at a place she had never heard of, providing for the purchase of fifty elephants, which were to be presented to the Corporation, and supported by public funds for the employment of superannuated keepers.

"But you forget that I haven't done anything except go to classes," pursued Teresa. "I am supposed to be 'out' now."

"Jolly lucky for you," remarked her sister. "There was no coming out in my time."

"I don't see much difference," said Teresa, "except that you brought your own food to parties and didn't wear such low necks. But anyhow, what I meant was that the war is over, and we're in a new place and we've got some maids, and what is the next?"

"I don't know," Evangeline answered slowly. "There are days when I want to burst—you know—with a pop, in the sun on a still day—like that, (she waved her hands) and then I should become something quite different. I should be full of ideas. I don't know what they would be but that is the exciting part."

"This is a very dirty town," Teresa said, as she stood at the window. "I haven't seen any people

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yet who looked as if they liked what they were doing."

Evangeline's eager interest had faded. "Haven't you?" she said.

"No, and I don't know what Mother will do with herself, either. I suppose there must be some ordinary ones. She's a social success, isn't she?"

"In a way——" Evangeline hesitated. "She's not like an American mother in those ways, but if you notice you'll find that you never can stop anything happening as she wants it to. I believe she conjures. She seems to sit down by a hat and take no notice of it, and then there's an omelet in it. If Father doesn't want the omelet, or we don't, she says she hasn't made it, and I spend my life trying to find out whether she has or not."

"Well that hasn't much to do with what I was saying," her sister continued. "We shall drift here if we don't look out."

"Drift?"

"Yes, you know—I shall arrange the flowers, and you will play endless games and go to things and perhaps 'take up' something, and I shall shop and be polite to visitors, and I really don't want to do anything else. I am not energetic, and I should love to live in a cottage. But everything is so hideous here, and those smells and awful faces make me sort of drunk."

"My dear!" Evangeline sympathised with little understanding.

"Everyone has always made me feel a little drunk," Teresa went on. "They say such stupid things; sit there gibbering and drinking tea, and yet all the people in history—anyone—Nebuchad-

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nezzar or Cleopatra or Anne Boleyn—were in society, and all sorts of real things happened to them; they didn't ask for it. And I believe just as much could happen to the silly people who pay calls. I often understand eating grass and letting one's nails grow." She paused. "And those people who are poor—they must know a lot. I want to know what it is."

"It is like my wanting to burst, perhaps," said Evangeline. "Except that I don't want to know all about those horrors. I hated all that in the war, though, of course, it was so exciting being useful that one forgot the mess. I should like to be in a dangerous country with a lovely climate, and live with a man who had read everything there is. We should ride all day, and perhaps have some children who wouldn't want clothes or governesses nor have diseases."

"Like a cinema," commented Teresa.

"Yes, rather. I always get so angry with the film girl who is left in a log cabin with a perfectly beautiful savage who leaves her the room to herself out of chivalry and sleeps in the stable and does all he can for her, and then the silly ass crawls screaming round the walls, and wants to go back to some odious young man in the city."

"But the city man would be much more likely to have read everything," her sister pointed out. "Your savage wouldn't know any more than you do, which isn't saying much."

"No, I know," she admitted with a sigh. "I don't know what I want; perhaps both of them for different days; wet Sundays to spend with the young man who reads, and the other days, when

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it is sunny, to gallop about with the dangerous one."

"I believe there is more in it than that," said Teresa, "and meantime I am going to study Strickland. I have an idea she can tell me the things I want to know. I had better find her, by the way, and give her Mother's message. I don't think she takes much interest in bells." She left Evangeline to speculate on life as digested for her by the newspaper, and went herself in search of the woman who, she felt, held some clue to the pursuit of her desire.

At the end of a week she recalled her sister's inspired description of their mother's behaviour. Susie had, it seemed, by some unobservable process, evolved a spiritual omelet out of the most unpromising material among the people who called on her. Most of them belonged to what Strickland, who had begun to unbend towards Teresa, assured her were "some of our leading families."

"The Manleys are very well known," she said. "Old Mr. Manley did a great deal of good, and was very well thought of all over the town. My grandfather used to work for him, and he always said he never wished to have a better master. I don't know so much about the young ones. My sister lived with Mrs. James Manley, and I can't say she enjoyed it. Everything was very near, and she left because she got run down with the work. But Mrs. Eric Manley, that called to-day, is well enough spoken of, though I don't think much of her myself."

"Yes,—Mrs. Carpenter," she said, another day, when she was turning down Teresa's bed. "I'm glad you mentioned her. She's another of the sort I was telling you about. They're well enough in

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public I suppose, but those who have to do with them when they get back know who are the real ladies and gentlemen. Now you'll hear a great deal, I daresay, about Mrs. Carpenter, and how she goes about here and there and all she does, but I wouldn't be the matron of some of those homes she goes to—no, I wouldn't for all the money you could give me; and I wouldn't be one of the inmates, either, with all the advice she gives, and she who doesn't know what it is to have one child left on her hands for a day, let alone six or eight. I don't say she doesn't go about here and there, and so she should, for she's the time and the money, but I don't think it's right for servants to be kept up till all hours washing dishes for those who study the poor, and up again next morning to light the fires in time for ladies to warm themselves while they telephone for the best of everything."

"Yes," said Teresa, looking into the fire.

"You'll say I'm a socialist, perhaps, Miss," Strickland added, as she was going to leave the room, "but it isn't that. I know we can't all do alike, and I don't mind the General, if you'll excuse me, now I've got used to his language. He's very thoughtful in some ways, and it seems a man's place to mess things about. But when I took in the tea, and heard Mrs. Carpenter going on at such a rate, and Mrs Manley, too, I felt like speaking out when you mentioned her."

"How you do gossip with the servants, dear Dicky," said Susie, who had heard the last word on her way to her bedroom, and called to Teresa to help her to fasten her dress. "I never think it is a wise plan."

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Teresa said nothing. Although she always received her mother's remarks with respectful affection, due to the fact that Susie never appeared cross and everything she said was incontrovertible, yet very little that was not a definitely expressed wish penetrated her thoughts. "If Mother wants anything done, of course we do it," was the understanding between her and Evangeline, but they respected her power as a conjuror, rather than her wisdom as a prophet. Susie's power over men had been great in her youth, and she had had much influence in the lives of women, but no one had ever counted her as friend or enemy. She had been an article of faith to some, of admiration, of liking, of amusement or indefinite irritation to others, but only her children in their nursery days had ever looked to her as a help in time of trouble. Her conjuring ability had been invaluable in the nursery and schoolroom. Her presence would always turn a crime into a bubble, and the indignant nurse or governess was compelled to see her rod break out into the delicate blossom of divine forgiveness under her outraged eyes. The impression of this gentleness remained with the girls when they grew up; but that was all. They might search the corners of the wonderbox where their recollections of her were stored, and find nothing that they could put together and call a mother.

Teresa had been surprised that day by Susie's immediate success with the women who had called. It is true that they had come prepared to like the Fultons, but they were in no way committed; and such all-embracing eagerness to love as Evangeline showed to strangers was against their traditions

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It is one of the customs of Millport before paying a call to consider first the reasons for the newcomers' arrival. A well paid appointment gives them a good start, whereas an indefinite purpose would be thought suspicious. Second to be considered is their pedigree. If they can be traced to some source called "good connections" another point is scored in their favour. A good income comes third, and, provided the rest is satisfactory, adds greatly to their favourable chances, but this item is not so essential as it used to be. People who are not at all nice are often rich at the present time, and even furs have to be more carefully chosen than in the past, for fear they may be the outcome of too recent enterprise. But the thing that tells in the long run is "views." The Provinces have collective "views" in a way that would be impossible in London. You must either think with the city or carry the city with you. To live in opposition to it you must be either a hermit or a fanatic; cease to love your neighbour or lose your reason. The apostle of a different creed from that of the city can carry the people with him some distance towards any end—the best or the worst—provided he uses the old ritual cunningly; but wolves and doves alike must be dressed in sheep's clothing, or out they go.

"None of that, now, with those feathers," the city says to the intruding dove. "I know you're not a wolf. You don't need to tell me what I can see. But you've got a beak, and I wouldn't put it past you to get pecking at my legs."

But they received Susie at once with open arms. She came from London, which is always nice; her

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parents had been born in Millport of absolutely pure wool stock, her husband had inherited money from a good old lady before the war, and Susie had only to appear in her own spotless fleece of nice feeling upon every subject—especially wine—for them to cluster round her with acclamations and summon their kind from the most distant parts of the county.

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CHAPTER III

MISS ARCHER, reporter for the *Millport News*, stood just inside the first reception-room at the Town Hall. There was a suite of rooms, leading one into the other, showing a vista of hats and baldish heads and faces of all sorts wedged together in packs or moving in a slow stream with eddies and cross currents. The stream rose in the great entrance hall of the building. It was brought by contributory motors and broughams, from all parts of the town, suburbs and county, and it flowed upstairs and through the rooms and down again through a temporary congestion at the first door where Miss Archer stood with her little note book. A middle-aged woman, mastering fatigue with vivacity, stood beside her and made rapid remarks in an undertone, pointing out this or that noteworthy face or garment. Her hand was conspicuous by being so obviously ill at ease in its white glove. It was a worker's hand, full of strength and sensibility, and the sillily cut glove sat on it like a bonnet on a horse. The Mayor and Mayoress remained just within the big folding doors which were set wide apart, a footman planted on either side. The footman on the left had nothing about him to allay the suspicion that he was stuffed, except his small twinkling eyes that spoke of much experience of humanity, a family life of his own and knowledge of the moral

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difficulties of rich men. His counterpart on the right was unable to give way to the same luxurious calm, being compelled to undergo the trouble of repeating strange syllables whispered into his ear, such as "—siz-an-Miss-S-Arkbury," "—stron-misses J'n'per," etc.; if it had not been that he knew the names of the greater number of the guests he would probably have broken down and been led weeping to the nearest public-house. As it was he battled bravely on, and beyond the momentary annoyance of the Harburys who became "Barleys," and the Muskovilles who became "Musk-and-veal," and so on, it didn't really matter. People who knew them knew them, and those who didn't didn't mind.

"Who were those last, did you hear?" Miss Archer bent to ask her friend. "They're new, surely; I must note their dresses; they're very good. There—the woman in grey with sables, and the two girls."

"'Fulton!' I thought he said," answered the tired woman. She followed them with her eyes to where they stopped, looking at the crowd and talking now and then to each other. Susie was benevolently dimpling, as if the party were hers, and commenting to her daughters on the beauty of the rooms. "Architecture makes so much difference to a building, doesn't it?" she said. "It would be so easy to spoil a big place like this by making it clumsy and in bad taste. But I do admire this immensely, don't you?"

"There's Mrs. Manley gone up to them now," said Miss Archer's friend. "I tell you—won't they be the new general's family that someone said had come? There's some new arrangement or other

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about the soldiers. I know my nephew who's a territorial said something about a General Fulton coming to be over the whole lot of them; not separated as they used to be."

Miss Archer wrote down, "—in a distinguished combination of old gold and palest petunia, relieved by valuable antique buckles. Mrs. Slacks looked well in mauve, with one of the new violet pyramid hats." "What did you say? Yes, I should think that's very likely. Let me see. Grey poult de soie, isn't it, with sables? and her two young daughters (she was scribbling again) in girlish foam of niaise crepe in the new swallow blue that has lately come into its own. Yes, that will do."

"There's Mrs. Carpenter speaking to them," said the friend. "I don't know how you are going to dish up that checked coat of hers again. I must catch Mr. Beaver if I can—he has just gone through—and see if he will take the chair on the 15th." She disappeared among the crowd, and presently Miss Archer tripped away to take a turn through the rooms to make sure she had omitted no one of importance.

"Shall we find a table for you?" Mrs. Manley said to Susie. "It will take us through the rooms on the way and there are several people you must meet."

A young woman, dressed with the touching pride of the connoisseur on a small income, turned as Mrs. Manley spoke, and smiled at her.

"How are you?" Mrs. Manley said. "I am showing Mrs. Fulton the lions. If you want tea we could fill a table. Mrs. Fulton, may I introduce you to Mrs. Vachell. You are sure to meet every-

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where. General and Mrs. Fulton have just moved into the Babley's house," she explained to the other.

" Yes, I know," said Mrs. Vachell. " I was going to call on you this week (she turned to Susie). Mrs. Babley left me several messages for you about the house, small things that she thought might be useful, but she didn't want to bother you by writing about them. I only came back from Egypt yesterday."

" Mrs. Vachell's husband," Mrs. Manley explained, " is the most distinguished something-or-other-ist of the century, only I never can pronounce it."

" Never mind," said Mrs. Vachell. " We'll leave it at that. What a squash there is to-day. Do you suppose we shall ever get any tea ? " They moved slowly on, and Mrs. Vachell found herself separated with the two girls.

" You must find it rather dreary being turned loose in a strange town," she said almost pityingly. " Has anyone been any use ? "

" We're quite happy," said Evangeline. " Do tell me why so many people come here. Is a Town Hall a sort of public party place ? Oh dear, what a row that band makes! "

" If we can get to the tea room we shall be out of it," said Mrs. Vachell. " No, this isn't exactly a public party, but the Lord Mayor has to entertain everybody. You will find later that you meet your friends here, and it isn't so bad. But you will probably be roped in to make yourselves useful before long."

Teresa thrilled once more with the breath of the thing she sought. " How ? " she asked.

" All sorts of ways. Child welfare or domestic training or inebriates—or perhaps imbeciles," Mrs.

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Vachell added, mischievously putting on an extra screw as she noted the alarm in Evangeline's face and the throb of excitement in Teresa's.

Mrs. Carpenter was to be seen through the doorway, pushing slowly towards them, elbowing one, patronising another with a smile, making expressive gestures to friends here and there indicating that her task was nearly impossible—but—hold on, little sheep! The shepherdess is coming. You shall have tea if she has to commandeer some one else's table.

"I wonder if you would mind——" she will probably say reproachfully. "This lady ought to sit down and it is impossible to find a table. I think we can get six chairs in here if it won't be pressing you too near the wall." It was by some manœuvre of this sort that she did in the end plant the girls, whom she had volunteered to find, and Mrs. Vachell, whom she could not very well get rid of, at a table where Mrs. Fulton and Mrs. Manley were already seated. The two elderly ladies who were there first drained their cups and withdrew, commenting on the bad management of the tea rooms and the "manners of some people."

Mrs. Eric Manley, Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Vachell occupied positions in Millport not unlike those of the kings of England before Alfred. Their territories were less defined, their wars were not so bitter, but, as the history books say, "the country languished under their rule and longed for a just and wise leader to unite their petty factions under his sway." Mrs. Manley ruled over the Fashionable-who-are-charitable, Mrs. Carpenter over the Charitable-who-are-fashionable-and-educated, and Mrs. Vachell over the Educated-and-incidentally-fashion-

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able-and-charitable. They were ripe for the arrival of a visionary like Susie who should unite their people in the peaceful practices of Love—love of architecture-and-so-on, love of children, of all weathers, of the poor, "even those poor terrible drunken creatures who have been taught to be wicked," of "your own beautiful homes." We have anticipated this last object of her love. It became one of the stock phrases of those speeches which made her the idol of public meetings in days to come.

But although Destiny was hovering over the tea-table, they knew it not. Perhaps Teresa felt something of the fate in store for her. Their chairs were near a window, below which the trams stopped to load and discharge their passengers. The faces were there by the hundred, the drab clothing, the mud were as usual. Did the scene never alter she wondered? Did the stream of people pour on like that under lowering skies perpetually—all day—Sundays—holidays, even through the night? She had come from the crowded streets of London, but that was utterly different. There was variety, sunshine, even leisureliness in the squares and quiet places off the main traffic; and besides that, the significance of any individual was so small that no one could feel responsible for his neighbour unless he were invited to interest himself. In Millport every weary pedestrian seemed to carry a personal grudge against those who had the means to escape from the mud.

Mrs. Manley was comparing notes with Susie on the eternal subject of prices. Even cakes made at home were almost too expensive to eat every day,

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she complained. Her husband had had to give up keeping a tin of biscuits at his office, and he often came home to tea to save expense, unless he had to stay and carry on work that the clerks used to do. It was impossible to have the sort of entrées one used to, made with just a little sweetbread or cream or something; even the eggs mounted up now——"

"Yes, yes, I know, my dear women," Mrs. Carpenter interrupted, "but do you realise what it means to *Charity?* You are only on the visiting committee of my beloved Institute, you know," she smiled at Mrs. Manley, "and you can have no idea. The very soap the women wash with costs us £20 a year more than it did; there now! What do you think of that? That is just soap alone."

Mrs. Manley looked a little contemptuous. "Everyone uses soap," she said. "I have to deal it out at our orphanage when it is my week for the store cupboard. But anyhow I believe there is only one thing that hasn't gone up and that is bi-carbonate of soda. That is why everybody's cakes taste of it. (She glanced at Mrs. Carpenter). How do you find things, Mrs. Fulton?"

"I try not to worry about it," Susie replied. Love seemed to envelope the table as she spoke, and even Mrs. Carpenter felt that she had not got the nail plumb on the head with her last blow. Mrs. Vachell pricked up her ears. "I do so want those two," Susie continued with a fond look at her daughters, "not to have all their young time clouded by perpetual half-pennies. Of course we are not extravagant, but we have none of us very large appetites and, as I say, I just try not to

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worry. I have no doubt that what we are going through now is somehow for the good of the world."

Mrs. Carpenter drew a long breath and turned back a piece of fur at her wrist. "Of course we all believe that," she said, "or we shouldn't be here; at least I hope not. But what do you propose, Mrs. Fulton, to do about the terrible suffering as it is?" Even the best accredited lamb in its first year at Millport must not have things all its own way in the fold.

Susie's eyes brimmed. "I think and think," she said earnestly, "but I can't see how it is to be avoided. It seems somehow as if it was meant, and we can only learn the meaning by helping everywhere we can when we get the chance. I think some of the saddest cases are often the least known, don't you?" Mrs. Vachell was taking an olympic pleasure in the new forces which Susie was evidently going to bring in on the side of good against evil. She looked on from the high ground of quicker wits than her two sister rulers. She now wanted to see what Susie did with her two daughters. "It is the younger generation that will have to find out these things," she said, looking at the girls.

"Oh, shall we," said Evangeline, rather bored. Teresa shrugged her shoulders and passed the cake. Mrs. Carpenter alone took up the challenge. "I think girls have lost all taste for the mere pleasure-loving life they used to lead," she said, "I know mine won't look at it. 'Oh, Mother,' they say, 'We're *so* bored with parties.' They are all going to have professions and Lena is going to do social work." Mrs. Manley, being childless, said nothing.

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"Are they!" Susie exclaimed, full of interest. "How wonderful! I often thought as a girl how much I should have liked to *be* something, but I never had a chance and I am afraid I had no talents." She dimpled at the three leaders. "I could only admire and enjoy. We must really be going, I think, dears. You belong to the University, don't you, Mrs. Vachell?" she asked as they dispersed. "It must be so delightful."

"Yes," Mrs. Vachell replied, "my husband does. Have you met Mrs. Gainsborough yet?"

"The Principal's wife?" said Susie. "No, she called last week, but I was out. I was so sorry." They were walking down the great staircase by this time.

"You must be sure to call on her At Home day," Mrs. Vachell warned her, "or you will frighten her. It is every Tuesday."

"Frighten her?" Susie repeated.

"Yes, because if she hasn't met you first she will have to ask you to dinner without knowing you and she can't bear that. There she is, by the way, still in the hall. Will you come and speak to her?"

Susie allowed herself to be the means of violently startling a massive woman—there is no other way to think of her—dressed in old-fashioned clothes, who was peering timidly through the glass doors that opened on to the street. She turned in a fright when Mrs. Vachell spoke to her. "Oh! is that you!" she exclaimed thankfully. "I can't think why my cab hasn't come. I ordered it at a quarter past five and it is nearly six now and it has come on so wet."

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Mrs. Vachell introduced Susie and her daughters and slipped away.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Gainsborough again—(it was her usual beginning)—"so delighted to meet you—so sorry you were out when I called. And these are your girls?—quite so—yes——" She relapsed into silence and went on looking helplessly at the rain.

"Mayn't we drive you home?" Susie suggested. "Our car is there." Mrs. Gainsborough threw up her hands and followed, murmuring. As they drove home through the crowded, dripping streets, Evangeline and Teresa crushed suffocatingly under the shadow of Mrs. Gainsborough's knees, Susie's kind little face peeping from behind a bunch of aged ostrich tips in Mrs. Gainsborough's bonnet, all three of them disconcerted by the unusual smell of warm eau-de-Cologne that filled their car, very little was said. Mrs. Gainsborough was at her request left on the doorstep of a house, cinnamon-coloured like the Fultons', at the corner of a cinnamon-coloured square. Once safely on her own territory her nervousness left her, and her smiles and genuine pleasure in the small service rendered brought Teresa another fleeting vision of the joy she perpetually sought.

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CHAPTER IV

MRS. GAINSBOROUGH soon returned the hospitality of Susie's motor by inviting her and Cyril to dinner. Her note was rambling and agitated like her manner, and ended with a postscript, "Please bring one of your daughters if she would care for it. Emma will be so pleased."

Evangeline and Teresa refused to have anything to do with it when the letter came, but Cyril said with genuine terror to Teresa when his wife had gone out of the room, "Dicky, you must come—promise me quick—but don't say anything about it——"

"All right, of course," she assured him, "but why?"

"They're all schoolmasters," he explained in an undertone as Susie came back. Nothing more was said until breakfast was over and then Teresa plunged for her father's sake.

"Can I go to the Gainsboroughs', after all, Mother?"

"If you like, dear, but I thought you said just now——"

"I know," she interrupted, "but—I should like to see the University. I think the Gainsborough girl would like it."

Mrs. Fulton looked suspiciously at her husband. He was filling his cigarette case from a box on the

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mantelpiece, using unnecessary care to fit them in properly.

"Strickland should have done that for you, dear. Are you off now?"

"Yes, presently," he answered. "I'm not sure I can come to the Gainsboroughs, Sue; we've some rather special business next week."

"I think we ought to get to know everybody as much as possible, Cyril, if only for the sake of the girls. And the University are the most interesting of all. If you knew what a pleasure it is to me to talk about something besides wine and money now and then!"

Cyril instantly threw diplomacy to the winds and began to enjoy himself, standing with his back to the fire. "I don't want to be a kill-joy," he replied, "but I learned more about those two subjects from old Wacks at Cambridge than I ever have since from anybody. But he wasn't married. I daresay the female dons understand the use of the globes and all that. By George! I remember their queer get-ups. Must have been some very deep thinking that led to most of those marriages; which, after all, proves your theory of the Higher mind. Let's go, and take Dicky if she wants to come," he added with the boldness that often came to him suddenly after hunting down one of his wife's insincerities.

By this time she felt nothing but an irritable longing to get him out of the room. Through the whole of their married life he had amused himself by making a cockshy of the sentiments which she presented to the world as the expression of her thoughts. He often exaggerated her insincerity,

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for the sentiments were as much her own as any other jewellery she might have bought to adorn herself. She admired them quite as much as any she could have originated.

"One of the children will come, of course," she said impatiently, "if Mrs. Gainsborough really wants some young people. It is very kind of her, for I don't suppose you have the least idea how dull it is for them, seeing nothing but soldiers and business people who have nothing to talk about. The Gainsboroughs are probably teetotallers—in spite of the set you mixed with at Cambridge and who had probably nothing to do with the life there. Most clever people think very little about their food. But you had better have your wine at the club before you start or they will think there is something the matter with you. Isn't the time getting on? That clock is a little slow."

When the time for the party came it turned out to be less of a feast of intellect than had been hoped and feared by the Fultons. In the first place the Carpenters were there, because Mrs. Carpenter was as difficult to keep out of any social gathering as was King Charles's head from Mr. Dick's "Memorial." If the festivity were a heavy duty for the cementing of business connections, Mrs. Carpenter was invited to lighten the dough of wealth with the ferment of culture. If it were a frivolous affair for the benefit of the young and thoughtless, she was there with her daughters. Hostesses included her as a precaution against any subsequent rumour that the scene had been one of unbridled licence. "Really, my dear—of course I wasn't there so I can't say, but I believe,

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etc." If it were an ordinary mixed dinner, town and gown, she must be there to make things smooth between everybody; to interpose when Mrs. Alderman Snack was talking to Professor Cameo about rabbits, and see that the conversation was switched off at once on to his last book. She had read it of course and was so anxious to contradict him on one point, the condition of India before the mutiny. "My grandfather, you know, was there as a subaltern and he always said he was *convinced*, etc." "A wonderful woman, Mrs. Carpenter," everybody said. "She talks so well upon anything."

Mrs. Gainsborough, being so very nervous as she was, of course had not settled on a day to ask the new general and his wife until she had made sure that the Carpenters would come. Mrs. Carpenter had therefore consulted her little note-book and had chosen a day when she had only one or two small committees and dear Amy's dancing lesson to attend, so that she would be "nice and fresh for the evening." Poor Mr. Carpenter, who was the overworked underwriter to an insurance company, was not likely to be at all nice and fresh, even if he had a good twenty minutes to dress after hurrying up from the office. He could be trusted to be punctual, though, and would be quite up to a little educated chaff with anyone of his own set—Mrs. Vachell or one of the Manleys—so long as he hadn't to tackle a stranger. He was, as it turned out, very happily situated, as there were only the Vachells, and Mrs. Eric Manley and her unmarried brother-in-law and two young men for Emma Gainsborough and Teresa. One was David Varens, whose father, Sir Richard Varens, belonged to a family that had

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owned land round Millport for three or four hundred years. Sir Richard had given money and land to Millport University and his son David had just left Oxford. It would never have done if Mrs. Carpenter had not been there.

The third unmarried man was Mr. Joseph Price, the son of Mr. Manley's partner. Eton and Cambridge had recently handed him back to the home nest, which he was prepared, with the backing of the Liberal Party and his father's money, to re-line and generally bring up to date. The old birds were to be furbished up and taught new songs; the young lady birds from neighbouring nests were to be simply knocked off their perches, and Londoners coming to Millport were to understand that Millshire was young Mr. Price's country seat and Millport was his little village where he went to post his letters and chat to the Mayor at election time. You could even buy things in the town now, he was told—quite fairly decent; of course not clothes and all that, but groceries and gloves and that sort of thing his mother found she could get there now. But the hotels were pretty scandalous sort of places. What? I should say so. Lots of churches though; some quite decent ones in the old part of the town if you're interested in glass and all that kind of thing. And good music too; you ought to go to the concerts if music doesn't bore you. There was a fellow there the other day—what's his name—came all the way from Russia with a little handbag—he beat everyone else hollow—never heard anything like it—thought his arm would come off. Abs'lutely wond'f'l. You've heard him b'fur 'n town, 'f course?" (I have

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burst into Mr. Price's way of speaking for a moment, but I cannot reproduce it perfectly.)

This was to Teresa, whom, owing to her father's military position and their having lived in London, he was treating with unusual effusiveness. He knew Emma Gainsborough slightly and had made an honest effort to talk to her. He always tried to keep close to the ideal manner at which he aimed, the manner of the particular social pen through whose doors he had been allowed to squeeze because of his politics and his father's money. He was already getting on very well with the manner, a sort of mincingly polite way of speaking, with the vowels squeezed slowly out as if through a confectioner's icing tube, and laid along the sentence, or else omitted altogether; the exact opposite to the broad flat tones of his native habit. The natural rudeness of vanity was sugared over in this way to just the "right" effect he sought; enthusiasm for this or that "discovery," indifference to anything tainted with popularity unless some popular thing became discredited enough in time to make it discoverable as a new taste.

"Been doing very much lately?" he had asked Emma Gainsborough dutifully before turning his attention to Teresa who was really his object of the evening. "Seen anything new?"

"No, I don't think I have," the poor girl replied, instantly ill at ease. Mr. Price observed the effect he had made, and scored several marks of superiority to himself; it made him feel good-natured.

"Peewit's brought out another book, I see," he said, giving her another chance. "'ve you read it?"

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"No," said Emma, adding hurriedly, "I'm doing welfare just now and it takes such an awful lot of time. I'm too sleepy to read after I've been wading through statistics all day."

"Welfare? Let's see—what's that now?" asked Mr. Price. It might possibly be something he ought to know about, though from the way Emma did her hair he thought it unlikely.

"Welfare? Oh, it is seeing about children—at least, my part is—finding out things about them and seeing what happens to them and all that; I can't explain it, but I have been making records of imbeciles all afternoon." Emma was reckoned a humorist in the family circle and many were the evenings when her father and mother went to bed exhausted by their laughter over things noted by her with a delicacy of perception few people would have suspected. Mr. Price less than any. His "Oh, I see. Splendid work, I'm sure, but don't you get tired of it?" was followed by a minute's horrid silence and then he devoted himself with a clear conscience to Teresa in the way that has been described.

Teresa's attention was wandering to her father, who seemed to be doing very well with Mrs. Gainsborough. She wondered what they were laughing at. She caught up Mr. Price at his short pause after the Russian with the handbag.

"No, I didn't see him," she answered vaguely. "What was he doing? Was there anything in the bag?"

Mr. Price was not very pleased. "I don't know. Pro'b'ly the last sponge in Russia, what? Don't you take almonds? I shall eat them all if you

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don't stop me. Oh, prihsless caat, what are you doing? come here and talk to me——" He broke off as Mrs. Gainsborough's blue persian stood up beside him and, having pretended to extract three or four long thorns from his leg, withdrew.

"I don't mind them one way or the other," said Teresa, "but I want to know something. Who is the man—the last at the end opposite—by my mother?"

"Mr. Vachell do you mean? Don't you really know him? No, that's delightful. He's simply won'f'l man—been digging, you know—Egypt—didn't you read about it? You ought to read the paper, you know. He's our show card. When I was up at Cambridge they were fairf'lly jealous that I knew him. I told my tutor that I'd seen him once act'lly in pyjamas and he became quite respectf'l and let me off a lot of lectures on the strength of it. And then you live here and ask who he is——! That's really great, what? isn't it? You've got to say something really brilliant now to make up or I shall think you've taken to good works like all the dear people here."

"Do you know you make me feel awfully queer," said Teresa, looking at him with puzzled interest. "What are you talking about really? I know you answered my question, but what has all the rest to do with it? Why should your tutor let you off lectures because you saw somebody who lives here in pyjamas? I don't understand a bit?"

"Miss Fulton, it is quite time you left that silly boy and gave me a little attention," said Mr. Manley, whom Mrs. Vachell had neglected so much that he

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had been keeping a friendly eye on Teresa. He liked the young and had understood that she was not enjoying herself. He included Mr. Price in what he said with a friendly smile and Teresa turned to him gratefully.

"I believe you are much more old-fashioned than you look," he said to her. "You were not getting on at all well. You didn't mind my rudeness?"

"No, I liked it," she answered. "I have met Mrs. Manley heaps of times, but I've never seen you nor your brother to talk to. I have noticed since we came here that you may know people for quite a long time before you are even sure that they have a husband. One has nothing to go by sometimes except the hats in the hall."

"We come back sometimes to claim them, believe me," said the old gentleman. Teresa's heart warmed towards him as the dinner went on. His kindliness was real, untainted by any wish to shine or obtain credit. He had the quick understanding of ideas half expressed, succeeding one another like colour in changing light, which alone makes conversation anything but a distorted image of what the mind sees. Questions come so often from a curiosity that wishes to compare others with itself to its own glorification. Each one that Mr. Price or Mrs. Carpenter asked had that end in view. Mr. Manley enjoyed his game of give-and-take without that ghostly referee to balance the score. Teresa began to understand dimly how it was that what Strickland called "our leading families" seemed to have been the pious founders of Millport in a way that no Londoner's ancestors can claim to have built their city. Mill-

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port was the child of dead and gone Manleys; it was handed on by them to new generations of themselves and of trusted friends who had watched over the early days of its growth. Tutors, governors and servants were appointed for the precious thing with that personal care that Teresa found so puzzling in the words "duty to the city," which recurred constantly in public and in private. Afterwards in the drawing-room Mr. Manley came to her again.

"If you don't go away and forget all our conversation," he said, "come to me and tell me what you want to do and I'll show you how to set about it. You'll find my office hat in the hall on Saturday and Sunday afternoons—and that's the one I keep my ideas in. I'd like to show you some pictures I've got of the old town as it was in my great-great-grandfather's time."

. . . . .

I had meant to say a great deal about David Varens during this dinner party. But Millport has proved too strong for him. It always must have been and is now overpowering for the gentle, detached characters whose strength is in enjoyment of the immediate thing that circumstances have put in their way to be done as well as possible; people who accept inherited comfort and adventitious pain equally, as it comes; who love and hate by instinct without recognition of any outside interests to modify their decision and who never go back on a verdict given by this tribunal of taste. He is to be Teresa's lover and therefore his first words to her should have been recorded, also his appearance, his manner and what they thought of each other.

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They should have begun at once with definite sensations of like or dislike. But the truth is they hardly exchanged a word. He sat on the other side of Emma Gainsborough and shared with Mr. Price the miasma of her longing for the whole evening to be over. He talked to her as well as he could, patiently and easily, in spite of her stumbles into pitfalls of silence that the least presence of mind should have taught her to avoid. He retrieved her each time without effort and set her on her legs again, wondering what was the matter with the poor girl, supposing she might feel the fire at her back. He did once suggest drawing a screen further along behind her and they talked for some minutes about the cold of Oxford Colleges, but she didn't seem any better for it so he gave it up. It is no use giving Mr. Varens any more scope just now. He will turn up in his glory when the time comes.

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CHAPTER V

It did not need many months in Millport to convince Teresa that idleness was not one of the snares of the city. She soon found that if any young person of the leisured classes were to attempt to "drift" she would have her aimless career brought to a standstill by some snag of "duty to the city." No one in London had ever reminded Teresa of her civic responsibilities. On thinking it over one day after a particularly strong dose of "duty to the city," administered by Mrs. Carpenter, she could not remember that the city of London and its chief magistrate had ever laid any personal claim to her services. She tried to imagine any such phrase as, "Have you seen the Mayor about it?" or, "What does Alderman Teazle think?" occurring in her father's conversation at his club. It was impossible. In those days no one knew anything of her plans or her wishes but what she told them; in Millport it seemed that the very paving stones knew who was walking along and why, and that carrier sparrows flitted from chimney to chimney with little messages of information about everybody and an index of probable explanations for their conduct—all dead certain to be wrong.

Mrs. Carpenter had not trusted to the fowls of the air to inform the Fultons that Millport intended them to do their duty. She gave them a few weeks' law, with full access to her own example.

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She never failed to explain in the street, in the shop, in the ladies' club, across the family pew or on the platform that the fact of her being found where she was would mean the loss of so many heart beats to the city's life. She would say, perhaps, "I ought not to be here, my dear, but I promised dear Mabel Somebody this little treat just to buck her up after the new arrival. Fancy! I was there just two hours before it happened, and my waifs and strays waiting for a tin of biscuits I had promised them, and Alderman McWhittock's funeral at half-past two. I don't know how I ever got there—but now what are *you* doing here? Up to the ears, I suppose, getting ready for the dance next week. What it is to be young! though I saw you resting like a wise girl at dear Emily's party. The men are so naughty now, aren't they? They won't dance—absolutely won't—except with their own old favourites. I always say to them now, 'No, it's no use. I am here to rest my old bones and you have just got to look in all the corners and pick out the plainest and dullest thing you can find and send her home happy.' I condoled with Emily because I know the difficulties, and after all a dance must be a success if it is to be worth all the trouble, mustn't it? Now what church do you go to——?" etc.

But Susie almost forestalled her remarks. She was there ready equipped by instinct before the call to battle came. Mrs. Carpenter didn't know what to think of it. It is said that birds of prey have their own allotted beats and do not poach on their neighbours' quarry; but they arrive, warned by some secret telegraphy wherever there

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is a vacancy and a corpse. Susie had evidently sensed the prevailing occupation of Millport and had descended out of the blue to fill a gap among the leaders of good works. She could not be said to " take an active part " in anything, because that was against her nature, but her name was soon in everybody's mouth as a member of all the chief committees of private enterprises. Strangely shaped gentlemen in black used to call on her between meals with papers and she listened to them with her gentle smile of the mother was has suffered all things; she recognised them instantly when she saw them again and remembered with which particular good work they were connected; and that is really quite enough, as she herself would have said. Ladies with grown-up daughters, who are obliged to entertain a great deal and who have no head for organisation and so on, ought to leave the running about to those who will do it so much better; what the workers need is sympathy.

Evangeline and Teresa, being newcomers from a careless place of comfort, were particularly susceptible to the unfamiliar poison of depression for which there seemed no cure. The mud, the damp, the ugly streets, and indignant, tired faces, the grudging service of the working-classes, the self consciousness of the well-to-do who walked everywhere in the limelight of recognition, the sharp division between those who thought everything was all right because they were comfortable and those who thought everything was all wrong because they weren't—all this made the girls restless.

A vision of Hyde Park Corner on a sunny day

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used to haunt Evangeline's mind. She contrasted the space of it, the blue sky, the buildings—" polite buildings " was the description that came to her as she recalled their appearance, perfectly groomed, keeping their private life absolutely to themselves. She felt a sudden hatred for the rows of pert little dwellings that she saw all round; " brick trimmings ! " she thought with disgust as her eye fell on the oblongs and stars and cubes inlaid in musty red on a background of livid ginger. There was nothing polite about them; they seemed positively loquacious about themselves and their trimmings and the nice people that lived in them. Horrid houses, she thought.

Teresa, though she did not know it, was distilling for herself a sort of love potion from the drabness and hostility. As she once said to her sister, the smells and the mysterious purpose behind the faces in the fog intoxicated her. All that she knew about what she felt was that an insistent passion was dragging her towards some end that she could not see. The interest that she found in her conversations with Strickland gave her a clue towards the direction from which knowledge of her desire was coming to her, and gave her relief from the excitement at the same time because Strickland had no grievance against society; she only disliked people—ladies especially—talking " through their hats " about work. For instance, she did not mind Cyril or Teresa being untidy, because " it was their place to leave things about " and she was paid to look after them. They never referred to her duties nor seemed to think about them. Mrs. Carpenter and Susie implied by their

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manner that they were selected by Providence to lead comfortable lives for the reason that every one of their common attributes of humanity, such as their legs and their brains, were of such superior quality that their births, their lives and their deaths must not be confused with similar occurrences in other houses. Work! Of course they knew all about work! Did they not exhaust themselves in explaining how early rising and attention to detail actually saves labour? If you clean a room thoroughly every day there is no need to turn it out once a fortnight; if you clear up as you go, wipe the plates with paper and burn it directly to avoid clogging the sink, and if you wear gloves for the roughest work and put glycerine on the hands after washing, there should be at least two clear hours in the afternoon for mending stockings or even making clothes. That was the point where Strickland became "horn mad," as she said. "I'd sooner earn me money by being starved and scolded as me mother was," she declared, "than have it explained that there's nothing to complain of. I'd rather have it all wrong and keep my liberty to object."

"But Strickland," Teresa interrupted, "don't you remember when you first came you said you wouldn't be blasted by father and you were going to leave?"

"Yes," she replied, "and so I should have if he had made out, as some do, that it was all a misunderstanding. But when I saw that it was just his way, as you said, and he wasn't aware of it, you will understand that it was no business of mine and I didn't object. There's never anything

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personal about the General's language, I will say that for him. It seems it's his nature, like my brother."

She took no notice of Evangeline, neither liked nor disliked her. "She's a young lady that will marry," she observed, "and change her servants and not notice who comes and goes nor how the work is done. She won't make much of a house, but no doubt she'll keep a housekeeper and not notice how the money goes. She'll always be a favourite with the gentlemen. My brother's wife is like that. You never saw such a house—and the mess! I often tidy it all up for her and it's all the same next day. And yet he thinks the world of her and keeps out of the public house so as he can take her about. And my cousin Gladys is just the opposite; everything tidy and as it should be, but she'll talk, talk, talk the whole day, pointing out what she's done; and her husband has taken to drink; he can't stand it, he says."

Strickland was right. Evangeline was already proving her capacity for being a favourite with the gentlemen by penetrating, one by one, Captain Hatton's well-ordered defences. Being her father's A.D.C. he was, as he had warned them on the first morning, so much about the house that he preferred they should not notice him; but then as Cyril counterwarned him, "they were a damned noticing family."

Captain Evan Hatton had always been shy of women because as a passionately serious little boy he had been for ever baited by a pair of lively young sisters. They meant not an atom of harm, but neither were they at all interested in abstract good-

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ness, which together with mechanisms of any kind were Evan's consolation for the trials of family life. He wanted with all his soul to know what made wheels (including those of the Universe) go round. Nature, which he admired, completely outwitted him there and he developed towards the Maker of the Universe the passionate respect of pertinacious inquiry incessantly baffled. He succeeded in finding out from time to time the elementary rules governing earthly wheels, but the vastness of the world (as he had glimpses of it through the life of his tame rabbits, the beauties of a well-kept garden, geography lessons and the upheaval of his own mind), kept him in a ceaseless ferment of questioning. The most industrious organ must rest sometimes; so at about fifteen years old he admitted himself beaten by the Higher Inquiry. He rested his poor mind in worship of that which he had questioned in vain, and concentrated his efforts on wheels which could be explained by those who made them. His sisters thought all this very funny indeed. They themselves approved of the Universe as a first-rate place to live in; it looked so charming, with hills and fields and woods all of nice colours. Winter, spring, summer and autumn were all nice in their way and could not be improved. The idea of tropical storms and polar silence and danger made it seem all the more cosy in England. Machinery was a delightful invention and they were glad it had been discovered, because it brought all sorts of comfort within reach and gave one's brothers something suitable to do. They did laugh sometimes when Evan took a really good thing to pieces and couldn't put it together

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again or when he got in such a bait about Emily giggling at the missionary. When the war broke out they stopped laughing at him at first. He was suddenly lifted in their estimation from the position of a dear, ridiculous creature to that of "our brother in France," a god among Olympians—"while we have got to stick at home." They worked creditably and humbly at home and when he came back they forgot his ribbons in the agitating question whether Emily's cooking would still do or whether they ought not to scrape up £50 somehow and get that kitchenmaid who was leaving the club.

When they began to get used to having him at home again they noticed that what had been only serious attention to rectitude in the old days now burned hot in him as passionate morality. They were good girls, secured from evil, if he had known it, by their happy natures. They would have thought it very silly to let a man kiss them unless he were an accepted lover, properly engaged; because where would be the point in being scrubbed by a hairy face; unless it were one of the poor darling boys leaving Victoria, and then of course one would hug any stranger. That is enough. We know the girls quite well now. There is nothing at all the matter with them, quite the contrary. But their brother's heavy sense of responsibility for their souls was as much wasted as if he had been Joan of Arc hiding an unexpurgated edition of Shakespeare from the cat. All the mistakes he had made about his sisters he repeated with every woman he met afterwards. He was wrong every time because the attention he gave to their

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conversation was of the same kind as he would have given to a machine that didn't interest him—if any such machine could be imagined—a musical box perhaps. Now everyone knows what happens to even the cheapest fiddle, still more to a bird, if its music is courted in that way. His sisters saved him from disaster by affectionate amusement that asked nothing of him. He offended a great many other women, but, to return to the simile of the fiddle, their discords meant as little to him as their harmonies, so he learned nothing from his failures.

Then suddenly fate confronted him with Evangeline, who also wanted to know how wheels went round and—oh, the poor fellow! my heart bleeds for him—the wheels she was interested in were those of love and creation and human nature; and poor industrious Hatton, who only wished for righteousness and good machines, was put into her hands to take to pieces. It is, as has often been observed, a cruel world in many ways.

Evangeline's mother had also been on the track of true love in her youth; her story has been written. But a world of difference lay between them, for Susie had wanted to possess love and had studied to be all things to all men to gain it, giving nothing in return; her daughter wanted it in order to give it away, as another lavish nature might ask for wealth to spend.

"Captain Hatton is less like an umbrella than he used to be, don't you think?" she said one day to Teresa as they walked home through the Park. "When I go riding with him he often stops being polite and tells me about the tanks. Yesterday he

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told me about men out at the war who had visions. You'd never think he was that sort of man, would you ? "

" I never think much about him," said Teresa, " I just think of him as a table that Father has brought in to work at."

" I know he doesn't talk to everyone," said Evangeline proudly. " He never talked to his sisters."

" Well, what do you do to him ? " Teresa asked.

" I don't know. I just went on bravely and wouldn't be put down. I was sure there must be something somewhere and I wanted to know what it was. He has a wonderful face, if you look at it. His eyes look so suffering sometimes, like something in a cage. I was sure he couldn't be all ribs and the best waterproof twill really. I said to him once at the Manleys' dance, when we were sitting out," she went on after a pause, " ' You know we can't always go on pretending that you are a pair of trousers and a coat and I am a bag with flounces propped up on two chairs. I'm a person and so are you. We must have heaps and heaps of things to talk about. Do, for goodness' sake, let one of us go ahead '—I really worked myself up. I felt I just would smash into that propriety."

" And what happened ? " her sister asked.

" He got red at first and didn't answer and I got awfully frightened. Then he said in quite a natural voice, ' If you will behave just as you like I will try not to put you off. It is very kind of you to trouble about me.' Rather as if I were a dog that he had been asked to exercise. However it was a beginning, and now he starts off by him-

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self. I think the great thing is that he doesn't regard me as a girl."

"What does he think you are, then?"

"I don't know. A sort of inferior Tommy I should think; uneducated but harmless, and quite useless. I might be his batman, marooned with him in a desert full of baboons."

"It sounds very unlikely," said Teresa. "You have a very muddled head, Chips, and you read such a lot of scraps that I believe it makes you worse; but you explain yourself quite clearly. I shall be interested to-morrow when I see that stuffed back at the breakfast table. Father would be amused."

"You are not to tell him," said Evangeline quickly.

"I'm not going to. At least I might have if you hadn't told me not to. Why don't you want him to know that his man is nicer than we thought?"

"I don't know, except that I discovered him and I don't want to show him to people; he's not nearly ready. And besides, he is like having a sitting-room of my own. I like a retreat that no one else knows the way to."

. . . . .

"Is Hatton in the house by any chance?" Cyril asked one day when he came in to tea.

"I don't know at all, dear," said Susie. "I should think very likely; he generally is."

"He's helping Chips to wash Tricot in the bathroom," said Teresa.

Cyril stopped in the act of filling his pipe. "H'm," he remarked. "Hereditary instinct, I suppose. Poor fellow."

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"I know by your face that you mean something unkind, Cyril," said his wife, "but I don't see how even you can make out that there can be anything hereditary about washing a dog."

"Not if there's only one person to do it," he replied. He was holding a match to the tobacco and went on explaining between puffs. "But when Hatton, who is a nervous fellow—begins washing poodles with your daughter—your own little girl—who isn't generally fond of work—I seem to see the young Eve adorning herself with the leaf of experiment just as Mother did. Have you ever seen a young chicken begin to scratch the moment it leaves the egg? It isn't imitation, because it does it just the same if it is raised in an incubator."

Teresa looked anxiously amused as a mother does whose favourite child is not behaving well in a drawing-room, but Mrs. Fulton was smarting under old sores. She said coldly, "Perhaps you would finish washing Tricot, dear Dicky. You had better tell Captain Hatton that your father wants him."

"Don't be silly," said Cyril. "I don't want him. I told him there was nothing for him to do this afternoon and as I didn't see him at the Polo ground and found his hat in the hall when I came in I remembered the story of Adam and thought I'd ask, that's all."

Teresa had gone out while he was speaking.

"May I ask if you never want the girls to marry?" Susie asked.

"Lord, no, I don't care," he replied, "but what's that got to do with Hatton? I was only joking.

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I suppose he knows all about washing dogs. I expect he likes it. And Chips doesn't know the business as well as you, Sue; she won't construe a wag of the tail into an offer of marriage. Hatton is a very upright man. He'd probably consult you first and lay out his plans on paper in the approved style."

"Well, if he did I'm sure I don't know what I should say," she answered thoughtfully. Cyril had once explained to a bewildered friend, "The great charm of an argument with Sue is that you never know which part of a conversation she will choose to take the trick with. You may find that the only lie you have told for years is used as an ace."

"I mean," she went on, "that I don't think Evangeline ought to be encouraged to act hastily. I like Mr. Varens so much better than Evan Hatton. He will probably come into his father's place very soon."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Cyril, really startled at last. "Has Varens asked her after dining here once? What in heaven's name possesses the poor devils! But I oughtn't to talk I suppose."

"Don't be so absurd, Cyril. I never said he had proposed to her. I only meant that she hadn't had time to consider him."

"What do you mean, 'consider him?'"

"I merely took Mr. Varens as an instance. I don't want her to be pushed into liking Evan Hatton just because she hasn't had time to think of any other. Ill-considered marriages are often so regrettable."

"If I were a woman," said Cyril, "I should say

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that I didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the things you say. Unlace me, Emmeline, and give me some more tea—have you got any?" He passed his cup.

"But do you see what I mean, Cyril?" she persisted.

"Oh, I see all right," he replied. "My eye wants shading if anything; it's positively dazzling, the light that you throw on matters of the heart. It's a pity you never met Darwin. He wrote on natural selection, but I'm not sure that he mastered the subject. You might——" He stopped as the door opened and Evangeline came in with Captain Hatton.

Evan glanced at his general, who was peacefully sunk in an armchair, playing with the cat. Tricot, the poodle, followed into the room and walked about shaking himself restlessly as if he missed something.

"That's all right, old Tricot," said Cyril. "Come here and talk to Pussy; she's your friend."

Tricot came in innocent confidence, and the usual recriminations between him and the cat began.

"It is funny, if you notice, that dogs are all for love and cats all for marriage," said Cyril thoughtfully, "and the two together are always chosen to represent domestic life—at least the ill-considered domestic life that you were talking about, Sue. I suppose it's handed on for generations."

Evan Hatton did not hear. He was at the window with Evangeline, trying to make her understand the principle of a magneto. "Here's Emma coming," she announced presently from the window. "She's getting off the tram. Do you want her, Dicky?"

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"I'm going out with her," Teresa answered. "She said she would come."

"Where on earth to at this time?"

"She has got a place where children go after school; she said she would take me."

"I do wish she wouldn't wear that hat," Evangeline said critically, watching Emma as she came up the garden path. "I wonder where good milliners go to when they die. They never seem to mix with good people in this world."

Captain Hatton's face reddened and he turned away from the window.

"What's the matter?" asked Evangeline. "Are you going?"

"Yes," he answered shortly and then he said good-bye and left the room. He nearly ran into Emma in the hall, so great was his haste and his preoccupation. "I beg your pardon," he apologised. "How could I have been so stupid. Did I knock your hat?" for she had put up her hand to straighten it.

"Captain Hatton!" Evangeline called over the bannisters, "are you coming riding before breakfast to-morrow?"

"If you wish me to," he answered unsteadily and waited for a moment while Emma ran upstairs. But Evangeline only replied, "All right, eight o'clock then," and disappeared, and he heard the girls' laughter in the drawing-room. He let himself out and spent the evening and most of the night walking along the sea shore.

"That's an unlucky hat of yours, Emma," said Evangeline when she went back to the drawing-room. "I believe there's a devil in it. We had

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one row about it before you came up." She went off singing.

Teresa's elusive desire had begun to show itself openly to her since she met Emma Gainsborough. She had been allowed at last behind the curtain where the faces that haunted her in the streets were no longer imaginary characters in a scene at which she looked on as a spectator. She began to know individual Tommys and Gordons and Gladyses and Victorias, Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Jason; to understand why Mr. Potter was out of work and what it meant to half-a-dozen lives when Mr. Jason brought home only a fraction of his earnings. She saw disease for the first time. She met pleasure and wit and obscenity and tragedy jostling familiarly together without prejudice or distinction, engendered by all possible unions of hunger, love, jealousy, optimism, sensuality, pride, gentleness, patience, brutality, callousness, kindness, ambition, hopelessness, fidelity, in all possible conditions of filth or heartrending strife with squalor; intelligence burning indomitably in fogs of prejudice and lies and stupidity. She had torn the veil which the faces in the street seemed to draw down between Mrs. Carpenter's "duty to the city" and some vital secret that the city kept to itself. The passionate love of fellowship that had tormented her with its insistence and eluded her by its formlessness had taken shape in the places that Emma and her leaders were patiently trying to remake, and now she thought of little else.

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CHAPTER VI

If Evangeline's campaign against Evan Hatton's prejudices had been a public war, the supporters of either side would have seen that the end was now drawing near. Optimists among the Evangelineites would have rubbed their hands and said that she had got the forces of his harsh morality fairly on the run; the pessimists would have prophesied (though admitting Evangeline's strength) that the struggle would break out again as soon as peace was signed. The Evanites would either have declared that Morality was going to the dogs and was being sold by Self-interest and Pleasure, or they would have prepared to retreat, still fighting, to the height of "A Strong Man's Influence," and determined to reorganise for a new offensive when the enemy should be weakened by marriage.

An important battle took place during the ride that Evangeline had arranged, when Evan retreated after her flippancy on the subject of dead milliners. He called for her and brought her horse from the livery stable at eight the next morning, and they rode away in that state of silent tension which precedes an explanation when two people who care for each other have parted in offence. Evangeline tried hard to make him "start talking by himself," as she had boasted to Teresa that he was now in the habit of doing. She tempted him with proof that she had absorbed his lecture on the magneto and

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was mistress of its difficulties. She threw him touching confidences about her plans in little every-day matters. But all in vain. At last her temper rose slightly.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked. "Are you angry with me?"

"I have no right to be angry with you," he answered with emotion, "but I don't understand you, and yet I know that you are good and could be great. Why do you pretend to be like the others and say things that are unworthy of you?"

Evangeline was overawed. "What things?" she asked timidly.

"It was a silly trifle, and I know I am a fool—but it made me hot—what you said about good milliners not associating with good people in this world. Emma Gainsborough is giving her life to God's work as readily as the saints gave theirs—she's a Crusader if you like—and you make paltry fun of her hat. There now! I suppose you won't speak to me again."

"Yes, I shall," said Evangeline. "If you will not shut yourself up into that dreadful silence you may say anything—absolutely anything. You make me see such a long way when you talk. I read the papers by myself and get into such knots because I can't see any connection between different things. But when you hurl me about from Emma's hat to the Crusaders, who I thought were people who fought in nightgowns and red crosses with a feather in their helmets and defeated the heathen—why—let me see, where am I?—well you see how exhilarating it is! I feel as if my mind had been galloping miles in the fresh air in new places."

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"Great heavens, what a child you are!" he said, looking at her in wonderment. Then he smiled and held out his hand. "I'm sorry," he said.

Evangeline shook it heartily. "So am I," she assured him. "And will you show me how to take the car to pieces next time Father lets you off?"

"Nonsense, he won't want it taken to pieces," said Evan. "What's the good of that?"

"Just to see the wheels," she begged. "And then I should be so useful if anything went wrong."

"No, you haven't got any mechanical sense," he argued. "I can see that. You understand a theory when I tell it you, but when it comes to putting it into practice you don't think a bit. I've watched you learning to drive; you do it all by the book."

"Well, what should I do it by?" she asked.

"Common sense and a thorough knowledge of the reason for everything. The fact that any part of a machine does so-and-so isn't enough; you must know why, and what will be the result if it doesn't act, and then you must treat it so that it will act."

"Oh, dear," she said. "There's the sun coming out! Let's gallop while there is grass."

It is superfluous to follow this love episode any further. I have met ladies who are always passionately anxious to know "what he said" when a girl announces her engagement, and who need no encouragement to tell in return "how John did it." But I am all against emotional indecency, and unless any private conversations in this book have to be recorded in the interests of research, or are betrayed by the genial indiscretions of sympathy, they will be omitted. Evan is the last person who would

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wish anything to be said of him in that moment when Nature, who had always laughed at his attempts to make her acknowledge the sovereignty of such Divine Rule as he was able to imagine, pushed Evangeline into his arms and commanded him to take her or suffer the pains of hell.

He saw no reason to refuse. But the end was not yet, though it had become inevitable. Evan had reserves. Evangeline's gallant forces had a tough time of it before they won. Suspicion was the hardest to beat down; Evan's sisters had helped to make that so strong. He reviewed his bonny black doubts every day, and led them out against Evangeline's joys. But there was all the difference in the world between his sisters' cheerfulness and hers. Their pleasure in life was that of mice in a granary, hers was that of a rush of invaders over a rich country; she wanted all there was. Her assurance that God loves His world was invincible. Evan's doubts suffered casualties that put them out of action; but for a happy marriage they should all have been dead. The smallest remnant of a strong army is dangerous.

These battles went on unobserved by Cyril. Susie noticed and said nothing, because she knew that unasked advice to a girl precipitates a crisis, and she hoped in secret that Evangeline loved her freedom too much to do what her mother would call "anything rash," such as binding herself in marriage before she had reviewed all likely candidates. As weeks went on she became more anxious. There was a look of settled happiness about Evangeline that was not what you would expect of a young girl, Susie said to herself. It is a mistake to wear

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the heart on the sleeve. One of the great joys of her own girlhood had been the security of living behind a veil of misty sweetness that allowed the public free scope for their imagination of what might be behind it and yet committed her to nothing. Misunderstandings had arisen in that way but she had not suffered and those who had done so had only their own imaginations to blame. She still made use of the veil, and the only person who made her feel nervous about it was Cyril. He had the knack of twitching it away, and never tired of the joke, which seemed to compensate him for the nothingness he exposed. In one way only, her disappointment about Evangeline's choice was a good thing to her. She felt it as a revenge on her husband for his cynicism about women and the jibes he aimed at her about their duplicity towards men. "Perhaps he will see now," she said to herself—her very soul bridling at the Spirit of Man—"that they do need protection after all. If he really cared for her I could have discussed it with him and he could have got another A.D.C. until this had blown over. As it is, it must just go on, and I can't prevent it—with the man here all day while the sons of rich people are sitting on office stools, shuffling oats and sugar through their fingers. Why can't some of them come and ride with her and show her their motors? And I suppose Dicky will marry a rent collector with a wooden leg, or a socialist who stands on a chair and wants to take away our money." Her thoughts wandered into all sorts of bitter possibilities, not at all in keeping with the maxim that "if everyone were happy and contented everything would come right," which she brought in so delight-

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fully at Mrs. Carpenter's little informal conferences on social reform. "Mrs. Fulton is so original in what she says," was a remark constantly made. But true it was that she thought differently at the moment. Circumstances alter cases, as she so often said.

Because of this grievance of hers against him, Cyril was not told of her fears, and in due time Evangeline's battle was won. Evan frowned on the tattered remnant of his doubts and bade them go home. He went in, his heart stumbling and stopping, to the study where Cyril was asleep after a day's hunting, and shut the door.

Cyril came down early before dinner, and found Evangeline reading the evening paper in the drawing-room.

"Hullo," he said.

"Hullo, dear," she replied, and went on reading.

"So you and Hatton have fixed it up," he began. Evangeline put down the paper, and looked up at him.

"Is that all right?" she asked. "You're not cross, are you?"

"No, I'm not cross, my dear," he said, as if he were thinking of something else. "I suppose you wouldn't tell me any more, would you? Why you really want him, for instance."

"Yes, I would, of course," she answered readily. "I'd tell you anything—though that's not true, because I told Dicky weeks ago that he was getting—oh well, you know—quite tame—and she thought you would be pleased, but I wouldn't let her tell you because—I didn't want to spoil it."

"H'm," said Cyril.

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"I mean I liked feeling that none of you knew him properly."

"H'm," said Cyril again.

"Well, what's the matter?"

"A powerful apple," he observed. "Power, my dear child, power."

"Oh, Father," she sighed, "you're not going on again about that dreadful old Eden, are you? I do wish no one had ever told you the story. You think women are always tempting men to this day."

"So they are when it comes to marriage," he asserted. "Don't you make any mistake about that."

Evangeline felt desperate, as if she were caught and entangled. "Do you mean that men never fall in love with them?" Tears gathered in her eyes. She had had some weary work at the last stand of Hatton's doubts, and now her father, whom she loved and believed in as a friend, was going to take the top off the morning of her happiness.

Cyril understood and repented. "No," he said, "Hatton loves you—but——" he looked at her inquiring face and decided to revise what he was going to say. "Have you ever heard of spontaneous combustion? It's a troublesome thing, but I should have more faith in your sex if they suffered from it in their emotions. They think too hard for my taste. But that's all. Hatton is the devil of a hard thinker himself, so you had better leave him to scratch his head, and say, 'yes, dear,' like your mother does when I give her the benefit of my wisdom. Then all you need is to go out and do just the opposite, and say afterwards that that was

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what you thought he meant. Don't incense him at the time, is the great thing. 'The Housewife's Vade Mecum,' as I read somewhere, or 'Little Polly's first steps in efficiency'." He kissed her on his way across the room to turn on some more light. "Just to wish you luck, dear, and to show there's no ill-feeling."

He returned to the fire and drew up a chair. "I'm in favour of marriage for all, myself," he went on, "young and old, rich and poor, never mind the reason, but get on with the event itself. The advent of little ones is, after all, the only thing that matters, as your mother explained to me. And that was you, Chips. There was a devil of a row before you turned up."

"Oh, did you and Mother quarrel?" she asked, very much surprised.

"You can't call a one-sided thing exactly a quarrel," he said. "No one but a man could quarrel with me."

"Couldn't they?" she asked.

"No. But your mother is very powerful in the way I was describing;——"

Susie came in just then. Cyril had told her while they were dressing that Evan had "put in a claim as consort for Chips; which just bears out what I said this style of architecture would lead to when we came; except that he isn't wealthy. In fact, he has very little except his pay."

Susie took the line that this was "all that could be expected in a place where people think so much of money that they never leave their offices till it is time to go to bed."

"That ought to make them all the more anxious

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to marry," he remarked, "or else how can they enjoy any intellectual conversation?"

"Of course you will twist everything I say to a coarse standpoint, Cyril," she said, "because those sort of cheap jokes are so easy to make."

"Where's the joke?" he asked, putting on his coat. 'Honi soit qui mal y pense,' as the leaders of taste remind us."

Susie made no answer, but closed the door between their rooms, and she did not go down until dinner was announced.

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CHAPTER VII

AMONG the people who called on Susie from Mr. Price's Paradise, the county, was Lady Varens, David Varens's stepmother. Sir Richard and Cyril were admirably suited to one another because the old man was a sportsman by nature and practice. He had had an adventurous youth and " mercifully," as Cyril said, " forgotten the details.' Then, on his father's death, he came back to Millshire and managed the estate with the same thoroughness that had brought him success in less peaceful enterprises. He married first a guest of one of his hunting neighbours. She was lying unconscious on a bank, with her horse grazing beside her, when he saw her for the first time ; and when he had brought her round and taken her home and called every other day to ask how she was it seemed natural to regard her as his own property. She died when David was nine, and Sir Richard married, two years afterwards, a lady whom he thought to have been unjustly divorced from a drunken old peer who had married her from the schoolroom.

She was good to David and kept her own counsel, so Millshire allowed her to carry on the tradition of Varens hospitality ; in fact there was an extra piquancy about her parties owing to the opportunity they gave for a little private skeleton hunting among intimate friends. Towards the following Christmas,

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while Evangeline was staying with Evan's sisters, Sir Richard invited Cyril to take a day or two's hunting with him and stay over the week end. Lady Varens hoped that Mrs. Fulton would come too, and bring her daughter, to hunt or not, as she liked. Evangeline being away, Teresa was torn from her heart's delight, the alleys, the rotting garrets and the dingy clubs where she groped all day for the scattered remnant of what seemed to her the lost birthright of the bottom class, their right to the fellowship of common desires and tastes with the people who filled her mother's drawing-room.

"What is the good of this eternal talk about all men being able to reach any position they are fitted for, if, when you come across the most lovable people in that class, you can hardly bear to sit with them for five minutes because of smells and anxieties and habits that shut them off like a cage that they didn't make themselves and can't get out of?" she asked Emma Gainsborough.

"We are trying to get them out," said Emma.

"I know," Teresa answered, "but I don't see how you can unless you kill Mrs. Carpenter." She and Mrs. Carpenter had perhaps the same end in view when they worked among the dismal crowds that swarmed in the mud and hideousness of the poorer quarters, but to the casual observer it looked as though the "charity ladies," as Strickland called them, were under the impression that in their promotion of health and virtue they were pressing something new on somebody who had never heard of it, while Teresa hoped to restore a treasure that had been lost by past generations.

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Her own experience was showing her that the cage door gives way before devotees who will suffer the violation of everything that makes life sweet to them for the sake of what they hold dearer, and she also learned the freemasonry of hard work; the point where she stuck was the apparent impossibility of ever bridging the gulf between Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Potter. How to wean Mrs. Carpenter from the idea that the social order was all right because she was on the bright side of it, and at the same time convince Mrs. Potter that it was not all wrong because she was on the dark one? As one of Emma's friends pointed out, twenty centuries had passed since the only serious attempt had been made to bring about an understanding between the ancestors of those two irreconcilable ladies. The best spiritual engineering had been carried on ever since along the lines then laid down; communications had been devised and traffic of a sort carried on. But as soon as Mrs. Potter advanced a little and caught sight of Mrs Carpenter and went for her, bald-headed, and when Mrs. Carpenter sailed along from her end of the bridge and then sat down and sang to Mrs. Potter——. I must stop this allegory or the reader will break down in tears of perplexity and perhaps send the book straight back to the library; unless he has himself lived for a time miserably wedged between the philanthropists and the slums of a city.

To get on with the story. Teresa was, as I have said, torn from her absorbing occupation and compelled to go with her father and mother to be the Varens' guest at Aldwych Court.

I believe there is no place so comfortable to stay

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in as an English country house belonging to a good hostess. The luxury of dressing in any part of her room without the penalty of gooseflesh; the deep, scented bath and warm towel three feet square; the rich, dry fluffiness under foot, and the cup of tea afterwards, brought by a maid who seemed to have nothing else to do, banished all visions of Mrs. Potter to such a remote corner of Teresa's consciousness that when she did remember her again the recollection had no more sting than a bad dream. She ate her dinner, served by willing men and women who performed their duties like priests of Isis, instead of, as dear Strickland did, giving her the uneasy feeling that one course would have been quite enough if ladies were not so greedy. She had observed sometimes to Evangeline that Millport maids treated their mistresses as if they were parrots whose dirty cages had to be cleaned out, and whom it "took up people's time" to feed.

David Varens is to play his part on the stage now, but there is to be no sudden change in the music to waltz time, nor cries of the villagers, "But here comes the Prince! Gay and dancing, bright and prancing, sing we now our welcome," nor will the light fade and moon children glide out from under trees and sit upon their mushrooms while he sings, "Queen of the dusk and lodestar of my dreams." He comes on like Cyril's millionaire, "walking quite unaffectedly" among a number of ordinary people. It was not until Teresa and her mother went away on Monday that she began seriously to prefer him to Mrs. Potter. It may be difficult for anyone who is unacquainted with the love of Beauty for the Beast to understand what a disappointment it was

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to her to find that her heart had betrayed her and was transferring its allegiance to a normal object. It was something between childish terror of the sea and the remorse of a pilgrim whose prayers have grown cold that followed on the joy his presence gave her. "How happy I am.," she thought, and then, as a ghostly voice demanded the truth, she added, "and I don't care a hang what Mrs. Potter is doing."

There were other people staying in the house, but she did not notice them and no more need we. Lady Varens and Susie talked and knitted and drove, and Lady Varens liked Susie, because it was impossible not to on a slight acquaintance, and Susie liked Lady Varens because there was mystery about her and she had great charm, with her soft eyes that saw much and told nothing, and her sensitive mouth whose utterances led to conversation, but also told nothing. Susie admired in her the ideal woman, and "we are so much alike" was what she chiefly thought of her. Cyril enjoyed his hunting and sat up late in the smoking-room.

"I hope you will come and see us, Mr. Varens," said Susie before they left. "Your mother, I know, hardly ever leaves this lovely place, and no more should I if it were mine. But I know you do come into town sometimes. We can always give you lunch and it will be such a change to hear about the beautiful country things in the middle of all our ugliness; I never get used to it. I shall be so anxious to hear whether that dear black cow gets all right again. Cows are such mothers, you know; one feels so sorry for them having to be parted from those sweet calves. You are going to manage the

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estate now, Sir Richard told me. How delightful that will be, and what a saving of anxiety to him."

"Yes," said David, "I come in two or three times a week to the University. Perhaps you would let me come one of those days, may I? Thanks very much."

He took Teresa through the woods that morning. She said less than usual, and presently he noticed this. "You look worried," he remarked. "Is anything wrong?"

"I don't know that you can call it wrong," she answered, "but I feel almost sick at the thought of going back to Emma Gainsborough and her office. It doesn't seem any use from here. I was bent on teaching music to Albert Potter the day I came, and now I want to turn him into a calf or a frog. What is the good of Emma going on sending different kinds of splints for him and telling Mrs. Potter how to put them on? The money I have eaten since I came here would have saved him from getting like that a year ago."

"Look here," said David seriously, "I have been along that road while I was at Oxford, and it leads nowhere, except into a sort of maze where you lose yourself and die for want of a fresh argument. If I had ideas I would come down to your place and do what you are doing for as long as you wanted me, but I haven't got any ideas and I have got fields—or rather my father has, and can't look after them as he used to—and I am going to see what is to be got out of them."

"I have neither ideas nor fields," she said, "but I had an enormous family when I left home last

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week, and now I have been happy and forgotten them."

"Did you forget them?" he asked.

"Yes, quite," she answered sadly.

"Then you can't really care for them enough to succeed," he said. This struck Teresa a blow. "Don't you ever forget your farms and things?" she asked, "not for a minute?"

"No, except when I'm asleep or hunting."

"Hunting! my hunting is done down there," she said illogically.

"Then where are your farms?"

"Oh, blow!" said Teresa.

"All right. Well, when will you come back here?"

"When I can't bear any more committees of the charitable. I wish you could see Mrs. Carpenter. Do you remember, she was at the Gainsboroughs the night you were there?"

"Was she? I forget. What like?"

"Like an hour glass, in pink—with the sand quite solid."

"I didn't notice. I couldn't make your Miss Gainsborough talk, that's all I know. Is there anything the matter with her?"

"Dear me, no," she answered in surprise. "She's very amusing when you know her. Mr. Price got her into such a state of nerves. He did me, too. Do you understand him?"

"No, but I think he is only trying to mix society; just what you want to do with Mrs. Potter. If you encourage her you ought to encourage him."

Teresa looked at him to see whether he was laughing, but they had come to a stile and he was waiting politely for her to get over. Instead of

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climbing she sat down on it and faced him. "It is absolutely different," she began to explain. "What I can't bear is to find people, who would be just like you if they had been sent to school and fed, unable to express themselves and living in such horrible places that one can hardly attend to what they are trying to say because of the awfulness. And it is nonsense to say that they can always get out. All self-made men say afterwards that they were newsboys, but there are thousands of darling newsboys who haven't got just the bit of extra that made Dick Whittington; and, as my mother says, purring among her furs on a platform, 'they are often taught to be bad.' She does talk such rot, and yet often her platitudes wouldn't be so telling if they were not made up over a small piece of truth. There is nothing like that about that dreadful man Price; is there now? Come, speak up."

"He wants to get into a better set and explain himself," said David.

"Nonsense," answered Teresa, "not a better set at all; only a more fashionable one."

"Well, but you say that your set isn't any better than Mrs. Potter's, only more fashionable. If that is so then Mrs. Potter is a snob like Price. But if you claim some other advantage that you want Mrs. Potter to share, why shouldn't Price be sensitive about having been born outside a set that claims to be better than his own?"

"I wish I could get someone who has as much 'lip' as you have to talk to you," said Teresa. "I can't do it, but I know you are wrong."

"Your Potter vocabulary is beyond me," said David politely.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE curtain now goes up on Evangeline's marriage. It took place six months ago. Cyril has a new A.D.C. with a fluffy wife and blue-eyed child; all three as happy as grigs. His name is Jimmy Trotter—(the Trotters of Burnside) and she was Miss Fripps of Ely, a daughter of the famous Dean Fripps. Cyril doesn't mind Trotter, who does his work all right, and Mrs. Trotter is always good fun at a party, though Susie thinks she is rather empty-headed, and can't understand how she can afford a nurse like that for the baby; it would be much more sensible if she looked after it herself, and got a really nice girl to take charge in the afternoon. Mrs. Trotter thinks not, as she does not believe in nice girls and prefers to save money by doing the cooking in which she is expert and let the baby have the whole attention of a woman whom she can trust. She doesn't believe in making oneself a premature fright by being a Jack-of-all-trades. They have recurrent arguments on this question and Susie gets the worst of it, for Mrs. Trotter disposes of platitudes as she would of kitchen refuse, without a moment's thought whether there may not be diamonds among them. Therefore, Susie says she is empty-headed, and does not care to see more of her than politeness demands.

And you should see Mrs. Trotter mimicking

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"Mrs. General" to the wives of Cyril's staff, all of whom she knows intimately! Of course it got round in time to Susie through Mrs. Carpenter, who heard of it from the wife of the Staff-Captain, who was rather keen on getting into the University set.

Evangeline was happy at this time, living at a place we will call Drage, where Cyril had got Evan an appointment. He found there several men who had been with him in the trenches. Their recollections pictured him as a man who had been of the greatest value as an unfailing joke; a good joke, too, for you never knew when it mightn't blow you sky high. It was always worth while raising him when you had a lot to think of, because his explosions of temper were entertaining enough to take your mind off any unpleasantness. And he was such a thoroughly good fellow; would do anything or go anywhere, and his mechanical genius had earned their admiration and gratitude for many improvised good things. Hicks remembered him taking a Hun's watch to pieces in his dug-out and—the story that followed was always a success. It preceded his arrival at Drage, and Evan found everyone pleased to welcome him and his wife.

Evangeline's enthusiasms and her naïveté were soon the talk of the place. Some of the women regarded her as a fool and some as "a very dashing young person." She certainly was, as Strickland had prophesied, "a favourite with the gentlemen." There is a pose of free speech and free living that is as closely bound by its self-imposed limits as any other doctrine, and it is particularly false because the naturally free have never heard of freedom; as Cyril would have pointed out, "it was knowledge

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of the damned thing's existence that made Eve a slave to propriety." Evangeline's knowledge of good and evil was, as we have seen, gathered almost entirely from the newspapers, and was therefore negligible. So she thought freely (which is different from being a free thinker) and Evan, who had eaten his apple with attention, was scandalised, and the ladies of Drage, who wore their aprons merely as a class distinction, cutting them long or short or leaving them off altogether, as fashion dictated, were astonished at her behaviour. Indeed when her instincts did, as she once hoped they would, "burst with a pop in the sun" of experience, she loved creation with a generosity that might have led her into all sorts of trouble had she been as faithless a woman as her mother. She was fascinated by the idea of having a child of her own, "a brand new person, whom no one has ever seen before, conjured from the vasty deep," she said (with some school recollection of a quotation connected with impressive magic). She adored Evan as the god behind the machine and lost a great deal of the interest in his character that had made her take pride in his reluctant confidences. Splitting hairs in argument about sin seemed to her an absurd waste of time when it was clear that no one would bother to sin if he were happy; and who could be other than happy when the war was over and a new generation coming into life? Evan's friends enjoyed her hospitality in peace, for she never teased them by the militant chastity, provoking but unyielding, which turns many a good bride into a firebrand. The average Englishman does not often engage in illicit love affairs unless they are

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offered him; so Evangeline's lack of decorum was regarded as a new and perfectly innocent game. Evan, with his explosive seriousness, had been a first-class jest in the old days, and here he was back again, married to some one just as funny in an opposite way, and the two together were simply splendid. The jokers were never tired of setting the one against the other in public, without an idea that differences of opinion could hold any danger for two people so obviously in love. They relished the stories that went round about Evangeline's latest indiscretions and told how shirty old Evan had been and how the two had gone off together afterwards talking all the way and you could bet she got it properly in the neck when they reached home. One evening, these mischief makers who had egged on Evangeline to persuade poor old Hicks to do his Fiji dance, with young Blake lashed to a chair in the character of a maiden, went home to bed in the highest spirits, and left Evangeline and her husband alone.

"I shall chuck my job at once and leave here if you ever encourage that sort of thing again," he said, standing in front of the embers of the fire that had made the little room so cheerful earlier in the evening. He had put young Blake's chair back into its place with a savage push, and was now winding up the string that had been broken in the final ecstasy that brought the house down. Evangeline stared at him with round, startled eyes. "Darling Evan," she said, "it was a game. What on earth is the matter?"

"It was outrageous. If you had ever been among savages——" he stopped, speechless.

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"But I haven't," she argued. "That's just it. I want to know. It was fascinating. I felt as if I were the girl and he were getting nearer and nearer—it was gloriously exciting. And anyhow—dear Evan—don't be an ass; it was pure farce, and I don't believe he knows anything about Fijians at all."

"My mother would have died before she would have allowed such a thing in her drawing-room," said Evan. "You have no womanly dignity. Everyone talks about you and the way you behave as if you were married to the whole staff."

"Oh, what is the matter with you?" cried Evangeline. "I was so happy and I have done nothing whatever. I don't know what you are trying to get at. How can I be married to the whole staff?"

"I assure you no stranger could point out which was your husband in a mixed gathering," he replied coldly.

"Oh my dear, you're like an eclipse of the sun," she said, getting up and putting her arms round his neck. "I have been so happy that I had forgotten all your Mumbo Jumbo of this or that being right or wrong, that you used to make my flesh creep with till I thought you really knew about it. I believe you would blow out pleasure like a lamp if you could and make us all sit and eat repentance by corpse light. I am going to make another fire in my room and have tea and cake there, and if you don't come and cheer up I'll telephone for one of my other husbands to come instead." So Evan relented until the next time.

They came back to Millport for a visit at Easter.

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"And when does Mrs. Hatton expect the great event?" asked Mrs. Carpenter of Susie when she and Mrs. Eric Manley and Mrs. Vachell had remained behind to tea after a committee meeting. The committee had been dealing, among other matters, with the case of Mrs. Potter's daughter, for whom Teresa asked admittance to the maternity home they represented.

"A particularly sad case," Susie had remarked, "because it seems that she hardly knew the man and only encouraged him because her husband drank and she had nothing to live on. If she had only come to me, as Teresa might have suggested to her, I would have advised her what to do."

"What would you have advised?" asked Mrs. Vachell curiously.

"I should have tried to explain our point of view," said Susie, "and shown her that, apart from the disgrace and all that, the man would probably leave her sooner or later, as he has."

"But surely, Mrs. Fulton, that is not the main point?" said Mrs. Carpenter. "Surely we want to awaken something more than self-interest? We want to make these girls understand that the marriage vow often implies suffering."

"Oh, of course," replied Susie with a far-away look. "But I think a woman always hopes to the end. They are so confiding and they forget that it will probably lead them into trouble."

In replying to Mrs. Carpenter's other question, however, she took a brighter view of marriage. "Not quite yet," she said, "but to tell you the truth, I never ask many questions of that sort. I always think that the glamour of a young marriage ought

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not to be rubbed off by too many practical details."

Mrs. Vachell used to wonder now and then how it was that Susie constantly took the bread out of Mrs. Carpenter's mouth without her victim seeming to experience any sense of loss. Mrs. Carpenter did sometimes hesitate as if she thought she had lost something, but Susie seemed so innocent of her theft that it generally passed as an accident. On the whole, Mrs. Carpenter accepted her as an ally.

"How do they like being at Drage?" Mrs. Manley asked.

"Very much indeed," Susie replied. "She enjoys military society, fortunately, which I never did. Mrs. Trotter envies her, she says, as she doesn't like Millport herself. Of course a place that is building itself up a great position with its University and its social schemes can't have much interest for people who are always packing up and following a drum from one dusty parade ground to another." She paused and, as her audience was busy with cake, went on, "Those dreadful folding beds and bamboo furniture that they all seem to go in for—I suppose because it is so light—depress me too much. I do love a beautiful home of my own, however small."

"I don't think you are altogether fair to the army, my dear lady," said Mrs. Carpenter, a trifle piqued. "I lived, until I married, among my dear people who were always on the move, and I don't think you would have said that their ideas were limited. Wherever they went they were fêted like princes by all the most interesting people, and I think it gave all of us girls much wider interests and sharpened our wits more than being shut up in the

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same set who all think each other perfect. Your parents felt it a great change, I expect, when they moved to London. One's individuality has to fight so much harder there not to go under with the stream."

"I daresay," said Susie gently, "but that was some time before I was born. I have always been a Londoner, you know. Of course I missed at first being in the centre of everything, but I have got to enjoy the earnestness and concentration of it all here. Like those wonderful things your friend showed us under the microscope the other day," she added to Mrs. Vachell. "One could hardly believe they were of so much importance until one saw them moving about."

Mrs. Manley laughed and exchanged a look with Mrs. Vachell and then Cyril came in and they rose to go. They never felt quite at ease with him. Mrs. Carpenter, feeling bound to assert her familiarity with military interests, stayed a few minutes to question him about his work, hoping incidentally that she might see Evangeline and determine for herself the probable date of her initiation.

. . . . . .

A few days later Evangeline was sitting in her father's study after dinner. Her eyes were red with crying and she sat in a deep armchair opposite him, blowing her nose at intervals.

"Have a cigarette," said Cyril sympathetically, pushing the box towards her. There had been something like a row at dinner. The Trotters had been invited and David Varens had turned up unexpectedly as he often did now after a late

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lecture at the University. All had gone well until the dessert, when Mrs. Trotter, with that want of perception that often goes with household efficiency and a bright nature, began telling of a rift in the matrimonial lute of the staff-captain and his wife. "It all comes of her being so keen on the University," she concluded. "She was bound to get scorched by Mrs. Vachell, sooner or later, when she took up Egypt with that giddy old professor. He knows too much about the Sphinx altogether." She helped herself to some grapes and winked at Evan Hatton. Evangeline grew nervous as she saw that he was excessively angry. Cyril saw, too, but not realising that the matter was serious he laid himself out for a little fun.

"Now then, Evan," he said, "we'll drink to the spotless reputation of the Army versus Thought, coupled with the name of Captain Hatton." He poured himself out a glass of port and passed the decanter. "Now then, up you get."

"I have no joke ready, Sir, about the sort of dirt that women choose to throw at each other," said Evan, and he relapsed into a black silence, fingering his glass.

"Here, I say, Hatton——" began Captain Trotter angrily. Evangeline blushed scarlet and looked at her husband in despair. Mrs. Trotter inspected him with amused disgust and waited for her husband to go on.

"Evan dear, Evan," Susie remonstrated. "What are you talking about? Mrs. Trotter will think you a great bear if you use such strong language about poor old Professor Vachell's little flirtation. You'd really think he meant it, wouldn't you?"

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she smiled round the table and was going to change the conversation when Evan rose.

"I am sorry," he said, "but I should have to finish what I was going to say if I remained, and perhaps I have no right—which of us has when it comes to throwing stones?" He went to the door.

"Evan——!" pleaded Evangeline almost angrily, but he was gone.

"Poor fellow!" said Susie, "I expect he feels the heat" (or the cold—I forget what the weather was at the time). "You know," she turned to Captain Trotter, "I don't believe any of you have quite got over that dreadful war yet. I met a poor boy only yesterday who was quite sure that Moses had appeared to him in a vision and announced the Day of Judgment."

"That's what Moses is rather in the habit of doing," said Cyril, grateful to her for once, though the occasion had been unintentional. "You know, Trotter, seriously, you ought to stop those boys gambling at the mess like that. There's some of them don't know the difference between a Hebrew and a bank account."

The Trotters went home early after dinner. Evan had gone for a walk and not returned, and David Varens and Teresa were arguing in a corner about something, so Evangeline slipped off to her father's room and there wept profusely while he smoked. When she was re-established and had accepted a cigarette, Cyril began to talk.

"I've seen more of that sort of thing than you'd suppose," he said, "but I'm sorry it should come your way, Chips; you, of all people."

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"Oh, I don't much mind, thanks," she answered, blowing her nose once more with a final blast, the last roll of thunder before sunshine reappears. "Only when it is in public."

"Do you get much of it in private?" asked her father.

"Oh, yes," she sighed. "Father, what do you think it is? He must be so miserable if he thinks everybody wicked when they are having fun. I would give up everything or do anything to see him happy, but it seems impossible."

"I always understood he had a reputation for being very good fun," said Cyril.

"Yes, to the others," she agreed. "They all adore him and he never minds anything they do or if he does they only think it funnier still. It is women he thinks ought not to be amused at anything broader than—— Oh, I don't know, the way a canary eats or something like that."

"Very dry humour certainly," he commented, "but easily gratified. It's a pity more of you don't care for it."

"Father, don't talk to the gallery," she reproached him. "You know you detest a perfect lady."

"H'm. First catch your hare," he replied. "We're not getting on with this, Chips, but I wish I could help you. How does he take the prospect of fatherhood? If it's a girl and you keep her in good condition I should think his number will be up shortly."

"But I hate fighting," she objected. "Why can't we be happy? And suppose it is a boy and he learns to hate Evan? I should give up then

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and run away with him to the desert and live on dates in the sun. I won't have a little boy brought up in that abominable nonsense about Hell. Anger is hell. I don't believe in a God with a black temper."

"Have another cigarette," said Cyril.

"Thanks."

"What are Hatton's sisters like?" he asked after a pause.

"Giggly little people," she said, "awfully kind."

"Do they like you?"

"Oh, yes, so long as they suppose I think Evan perfect."

"Does he object to them?"

"No, he talks to them about carburettors and their G.F.S. and the dogs."

"Oh, well, that shows he can be all right if he's interested," Cyril remarked with some relief. "You evidently haven't mastered the art of distraction that I warned you about, you remember.

'J. is for James, Maria's younger brother,
Who, walking one way, chose to look the other.'

That is the secret of married happiness, I find; to act like James."

The front door banged and they heard Evan come upstairs. He stopped for a moment outside the door and then came in. "May I come in, Sir?" he asked, "I heard Evangeline was here. I'm very sorry I lost my temper at dinner. I've been round to Trotter and apologised; but I can't stand that woman."

"Oh, Evan, you are a good bird," said Evangeline. "Come and sit down here and have a cigarette."

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"I had better go down and throw out Varens," said Cyril, looking at the clock, "unless—(an idea struck him)—unless you care to go, Chips, and tell your mother I think I am a little feverish and would she like to come and rub me with camphorated oil?" Evangeline stared at him.

"What on earth for?" she asked.

"And tell Varens I'll be down in a minute when the attack has worn off, if he wouldn't mind waiting," Cyril continued. "I'm rather inclined to back up young David against Miss Emma Goliath when it comes to taking up Dicky's time."

"Where do you get all your Scripture knowledge from?" she asked wonderingly.

"I have often read the lessons," he assured her; then he remembered his son-in-law and looked at him guiltily, but all was calm. Evan was listening and smoking benevolently. Evangeline resumed, "Mother will never swallow that rot."

"Then I must do it myself," Cyril decided reluctantly. "Down with Emma Goliath and her musty cohorts!" He left the room and a few minutes afterwards they heard him rummaging in a book-case in the passage for the Army List of 1913, while Susie held the candle.

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CHAPTER IX

YOUNG Mr. Price worked quite hard ("rehrly, you know, kait sairys effort!") to bring his parent's house up to the requirements of his college friends. He was not likely to ask anyone to his home except for political or enterprising reasons, because Millport at its richest did not provide much entertainment for unsympathetic guests. Its merchant princes fell short of imagination when it came to spending. They were as unlike the Medici as could well be imagined. They not only failed to encourage art, but they disliked it and fought against it. It took as much pressure of public opinion from rival cities and continents to get anything of value into the town as would have been required to turn Lobengula into a St. Anthony. Sometimes when this or that architect, painter, poet or musician was known to have built, decorated or filled the super-halls of America and returned burdened with contracts and delicious food, Millport used to stir uneasily in its contempt and occasionally went so far as to despatch a clerk to find out if there were any of the stuff left; because America's habit of apt valuation is only too well known in business circles. The fact that her people also care passionately for their purchases might otherwise pass unnoticed. Neither did Millport indulge itself much in luxuries such as sailing, travelling or sport. The Prices

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kept a big motor which they used carefully, often suffering the horrors of the local train or the crowded tram rather than be unbusiness-like with petrol. Their clothes were a source of pride rather than pleasure. Mrs. Price was timid in her choice of garments and inclined to the perfect taste prescribed by the lady-in-waiting at Messrs. Venison and Phipps. "Mantles this way, Modom," said the junior assistant in black charmeuse, and then Miss Figginbottam, whom Mrs. Price "always reckoned on," aged forty-five, disillusioned and imperative, stepped forward and gave the casting vote between the grey moire velours and the rather richer effect of the petunia and chinchilla.

But young Mr. Price and his sisters now told the poor old lady that this would not do. Her daughters took her to London and brought her back with monkeys' tails and Balkan embroideries hanging slantwise over her innocent curves; they trotted her about in high-heeled shoes instead of the soft kid boots that Bollingworth's used to make so well to her pattern. They did her hair in the fashion of Goya's mistress and made her drink cocktails and become a vegetarian, but forbade her to smoke, which she did not understand. Her son taught her the names of the new poets, but could never get six quotable lines of their poetry into her head because there was "nothing to catch hold of" about it. Then they began on Dad; and he took to it like a bird. There was no trouble with him. He put himself entirely in the hands of his son's tailor and then was told he looked too smart. So he stood patiently and allowed his trousers to be let down till they corkscrewed ever so rightly down

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his short legs. He shaved off his beard and grew a very intellectual-looking moustache; but his daughters told him he looked like a Labour Member and made him shave it off. He smoked a pipe, which he did not care for, and also learned when to smoke it; as, for instance, when his old friends of the city had all got out their cigars. He was made to eat less and give up carving; forbidden to press his guests to a second or third helping and privately instructed to let the butler manage. He was persuaded to buy some pedigree dogs for Mrs. Price, and a man was hired to lecture to her once a week on their management and breeding as she wouldn't learn from books. The more they tore up the drawing-room the better the young Prices were pleased, though it caused their mother secret agony. Besides the names of poets and their works, the parents were made to learn the phraseology of farming, lawn tennis, cricket, golf, sex-boredom and the religions of the world.

It was during the time when these social gymnastics were being most arduously practised by the Price family that they gave an evening party; one might almost suppose for the purpose of taking their minds off themselves. "Everybody" was there and a few representative nobodies, just to show that Mr. Price, senior, was in touch with the political movement of the day. "The University," of course, were there, because though it used not to be considered the thing in Millport to encourage people who lived in poky houses and "talked superior" and "made fun," it is different now that the aristocracy have taken to asking even theatrical people about and marrying professors and so on.

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You never know in these days when your local goose won't go away somewhere and become a swan and get written up in the papers and go to Court or even make money. Once bitten, twice shy. Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. James Manley and Mrs. Price had one or two secret grievances against certain home-clad young wives whom they had avoided as "not quite——" and who had gone back on them later by being positively run after by all sorts of people; people you wouldn't expect. How on earth is one to know? Jupiter ought to label his protégés in some way from the start so that honest people who can afford the best of everything may know where to look for it.

"Would you believe it, Mrs. —er?" Mrs. Manley had been known to say, on coming to something of the sort in the pages of her *Times*.

"No, and if you ask me, I think it's absu-u-rd," replied Mrs. Price in her new accent.

"I used to think her decidedly peculiar," put in Mrs. Carpenter, "but there never was any question that he was immensely clever. I used to talk to him by the hour." Emma Gainsborough was reported to have said that she hoped that when Millport put up a memorial to Mrs. Carpenter it would be in the appropriate form of a weathercock.

The Prices' house was about three times the size of the Fultons'. It was of the same pattern as all the other houses in the neighbourhood; only its square mass seemed to have plumped itself down with more aggressive self-satisfaction than the others. On a close spring day it could almost be heard breathing there on its bit of gravel, puffing and grunting, "Now then; what dju looking at?

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Go away. This is Mr. Price's house. We've got four reception rooms, twelve bedrooms, double tennis court, treble croquet lawn, copious vinery, garage and the usual offices."

It must be admitted that the party was a good one to the extent that the prodigality of limitless self-satisfaction can go. The Prices meant well so far as they could see beyond their own affairs; and their unfortunate haziness over the rest of humanity was probably not their fault. Some day the school of "Hope-for-all" thought may enlarge its activities and devise a sort of Borstal system for the spiritually deficient, and the habits of the Prices will be investigated and probably traced to some quite simple defect in the marrow; the juice of a dog's kidney may perhaps be injected and suitable exercises prescribed, and so on.

Dancing was going on in the larger of the two drawing-rooms, cards were to be played in the other, an "imperial supper," as someone reported, was laid out in the dining-room and Father's den was banked up all round by about a hundred hats, in the middle of which an old retainer with a face like the largest and richest muffin ever seen sat as if in a nest. No one could have approved more thoroughly of the proceedings than he. He had spent nearly all his life in waiting on the ladies and gentlemen of Millport in the evenings and in the small hours. By day it is supposed that he slept and murmured in his dreams, "Cold chicken or galantine, Sir? Lobster salad or trifle, Miss? Champagne, Madam?" He was now too rheumatic for this labour of love, so he sat among the hats and greeted the familiar faces as they came in.

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A few of them, such as Mr. Manley, spoke to him. "Ah, Higgins, so you're here, are you?" they said. "Wet night, isn't it?" and then they passed into the bright light and deafening chatter. Cyril came in to leave his coat and hat at the same moment as Sir Richard was receiving his ticket. "Hullo, what brings you here?" he said. "Didn't know you came to these things."

"I've laid a foundation stone this afternoon and looked in on my doctor," Sir Richard began, and he paused a moment to dust his sleeve with a clothes brush.

"Pure coincidence, I hope?" Cyril asked anxiously.

"No, it's a fact," the old man assured him. "But I'll tell Milly you asked and what's more I won't tell her that Queen Anne sent that joke to *Punch*. She has got the car here and I thought I might as well go back in it. Young David is here somewhere with her. By-the-bye, Price wants me to let Aldwych to him for the hunting next year. I may have to go abroad, but I can't make up my mind." He spoke in a low voice, but Higgins heard.

"I shouldn't," Cyril answered. "You never know what those sort of people will do with a place."

"How d'you mean?" asked Sir Richard.

"Oh, I don't know," Cyril replied, "but it is never the same afterwards." It was characteristic of him not to connect any mental process with a globe of flesh encircled by hats, so he spoke in his usual tone. "You never get the smell of money out afterwards, and it demoralises tenants worse

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than the plague. And what would you do with the stables?"

"He wants to buy the lot," said Sir Richard.

"My dear fellow!" Cyril exclaimed, and then words failed him. "Here, come along and let's see where the bottle imp has his lair. That foundation stone had your wits in it, I think."

Mr. Joseph Price had been dancing with Evangeline and they were now sitting in the winter garden. "You're living at Drage now, aren't you?" he asked. "Rather a wretch'd sort of place, isn't it? Not much to do there, what?" Evangeline looked at him in surprise. "What sort of things can't you do?" she asked. "I should think you could do anything there is to do as well there as anywhere; unless you want to shoot bears or ride elephants."

"I led the strainuous life there for a bit," he replied. "I never was so f'd up in my life."

"How long were you there?" Evangeline asked.

"Oh, on and off f' three years in charge 'f a batt'ry."

"And where did your battery go to?" She was full of interest.

"Well, 'n point 'f fact it stayed where 't was," he replied carelessly. "They'd had 'nough, you see, 'f sending out f'llers not prop'ly trained, and the f'llers they sent to us then weren't fit t' handle a catapult. H'wever, we pushed them off in th' end."

"And then where did you go?" she pursued.

"I'm 'fraid you'll be raather shocked," said Mr. Price, smiling, "but I never got further than Switch'nham. Kait sairysly though, the Gov'nment

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took over the Dad's plant there and not a soul knew an'thing about it. I had t' run the whole blooming show by m'self with a handful of r'tired M'thuselahs. Awf'l shaame, I thought, digging the pwur old things out at their time 'f life. But now you have the whole sordid story 'f m' life. Not much of a f'ller, Price, is he? I know that's what you're thinking."

"Well, I want to be quite fair," said Evangeline. "Have you got anything the matter with you?"

"No, sound 's a bell," said young Joseph.

"Well, but had you anything then?" she persisted. "Groggy arms or legs or insides?"

"Lac'ration of right forearm 'n' elbow, received when leaving th' theatre in state 'f intoxication during 'n air raid," he replied, grinning at her, "also sustained loss 'f an eye and inj'ry to left ankle."

"Honest?" she asked earnestly. "Let me look at your eye."

"'T's glass, but there's nothing green in it," said Mr. Price, holding down one eyelid, and she saw that what he said was true.

The music of the next dance began and he rose. "You dancing this?" he asked, "or c'n I get you a partner? I'm 'fraid I've got to trot out Miss Gainsborough. I shall keep her meuving for she caan't talk."

"I've lost my programme," said Evangeline, "but I'm almost certain I'm dancing with some kind of a Manley, with pink eyes—— Oh, I'm sorry, I expect he is your cousin; everybody is here."

"Yes, that's Claud, I expaect, but don't mind

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me, please," Mr. Price replied. "His mother's my aunt. But I don't see him or my partner——" He looked round and they waited a moment. "He's great on the pwur, too," he said. "P'haps they're hatching something t'gether. I don't alt'gether b'lieve in it m'self, d'you? Of course it's awf'lly fine and all that and I 'dmire it immensely, but I think it 'ncourages them t' have grievances—makes them dwell on their p'sition and so on, which after all can't be helped. Don't you rather agree?"

"I don't know," said Evangeline. She was not attending much for she had caught sight of her husband talking seriously to Mrs. Vachell and wondered what it was about. She recalled her mind to what Mr. Price was saying. "My sister thinks of nothing else," she said, "but I am no good at it; I am too lazy and selfish." Emma Gainsborough appeared just then and Mr. Price left Evangeline with an apology.

"Awf'lly hot, what?" he observed to Emma when they had been labouring round the room a few minutes. Emma was not a good dancer.

"Hot what, what hot?" she mimicked him rather crossly. "You had better stop and have an ice."

"Forthcoming!" he observed as they stopped and he inspected her curiously. "Forthcoming indeed! You're magnif'cent actress, you know, Miss Gainsborough. Why couldn't you do thaat when I came to dinner with you, 'nstead of making me think I was boring you all th' time?"

Emma ignored his last sentence. "I am very sorry," she said, "but I do so hate parties. I get to know such a lot about the food before I see it, and I know all the time that my father will criticise

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every dish afterwards and mother will feel she has been a failure and say that she must get another cook; and we never do. We have had the same one for years and she gets steadily older and worse."

"Have some coffee or 'n ice?" he suggested. "What c'n I get you? I say, th' band seems to be packing up—that means supper. Will you excuse me as I merst look after one of the dowagers. Claud will take you in. Here, Claud," he beckoned to his cousin, "'ll you taek Miss Gainsborough?" and he departed in haste. He found that his mother had allotted Susie to him from among "the dowagers." The parent Gainsboroughs, Sir Richard and his wife, Cyril and the sister of the ex-Lord Mayor, filled a table with their host, and Joseph Price and Susie sat together close by.

"A most charming young man, that Joseph Price," Susie remarked in her room that night. "I wish Evangeline had met him before dear Evan came to the house so constantly. He is so fond of sport. I hear there is some idea of his father taking Aldwych."

"Mother Price's diamonds would flash the glad news from tower to tower," said Cyril with more animosity than he generally showed to anyone. "Her searchlights played over me at supper till anyone could have spotted the lobster swimming in the champagne." Susie took refuge in silence and they went to bed. Evangeline and Evan were talking in their room at the same time. "I hope you had supper," she said, "I feel I don't want any more to eat for days. Whom did you get hold of?"

"Mrs. Vachell," he answered. "She is a very charming woman; most interesting and cultivated."

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"Evan, I shall never understand you," she said with amusement. "You disapprove of the most harmless people and Mrs. Vachell does more harm than almost anyone at Drage."

"Now that is so like a woman," said Evan. "Always running down your own sex if a man praises one of them."

Evangeline winced under the injustice and her amusement died. "You will give me a sharp tongue some day that I wasn't born with," she said hotly. "What I meant was that Mrs. Vachell doesn't believe in any of the things you are always fighting about, she isn't kind to people for she doesn't like them, and Mrs. Carpenter——"

"Don't mention her," said Evan. "She's an awful woman."

"Yes, I know you can't stand her any more than you can stand Mrs. Trotter who is a perfectly harmless, common little thing, as good as gold. But Mrs. Carpenter is the solid prop of the whole edifice of what I understand you want people to be and yet you hate her."

"She's a humbug," said Evan, "that's why."

"I don't think Mrs. Vachell believes in anything except brains," said Evangeline. "That's her own affair," he replied. "That is a matter between her and her Maker. All I say is that she behaves like a lady and talks intelligently, without that silly affectation of chaff that spoils most women."

"She doesn't work nearly as hard as Mrs. Carpenter," Evangeline laboured on. She would always take up any cause at a moment's notice and sacrifice the approval she loved best in her whole-hearted defence.

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"Well, keep your opinion and I'll keep mine," he said, "I never could help being fond of you, Evangeline, but you do exasperate me sometimes more than I can tell you. I never know whether you deliberately won't see what I am talking about or whether you can't."

"If that is all," she said contentedly, "I don't mind. I thought you were angry with me."

The Gainsboroughs were habitually early risers. At half-past nine they generally parted for the day; the Principal to his principalling, his wife to the kitchen, fortified by renewed hope of Annie being able to cook something really nice to-day; Emma to the grimy back street where she had her office. It had been late when they reached home after the Prices' party, and Mrs. Gainsborough's inevitable question, "Would you like anything, dear, before you go to bed?" was known to the other two to offer no inducement to sitting up; no one can talk over a feast on digestive biscuits and water. The three bedroom doors were shut within ten minutes after the cab had rattled away down the street and not a sound was heard in the big house except faint snoring from the top floor and the ticking of the grandfather clock on the landing below. Emma got into bed and heard the clock gather itself together with a hoarse rattle and strike one; four church clocks answered it a minute later. The trams had stopped and the road was so silent that a policeman's footstep was heard all up the street that lay behind the house, round the corner and down past Emma's window almost to the end of the Square. "Certainly not! Certainly not!" Emma imagined the

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footsteps saying, and her heart warmed to the image of faithful Robert, patient and decorous, with order as his means of subsistence and disorder his only hope of pleasure in the monotonous hours. "Certainly not. Certainly not." The clocks chimed two strokes and then one; half-past one. Robert was coming back. Cats began to quarrel in the sooty flower beds of the Square; scuffled, spat, shrieked and vanished. Emma thought harshly of them and gradually dozed. The silence was broken by a sudden uproar in the street at the back, near the corner of Robert's beat, where rows of mean little houses led down to one of the railway stations. There were loud sounds of quarrelling, a woman's voice and two or three men; a splintering of glass, a scream, grumbling, threats and oaths and then—"Certainly not. Certainly not." Robert was coming back.

"'Ere, what's this?" she imagined he would say when he reached the corner, but all was silent before he had passed the Square, and any hope of incident for that night faded away as the clock struck two and the rain began to fall gently. Emma was wide awake now and lay for some time thinking of her work with the hopelessness of a tired body and mind. Robert probably never suffered in this way. If he got in the dumps he took something for it, "an' as for that lot up there," he would have said, pointing a thumb up the poverty-stricken scene of the quarrel, "the sooner they was all turned out the better." Mrs. Robert probably understood more than he did about the discouraging habits of matter, which collects again as soon as it is displaced. Teresa's dreams were busy with other

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plans for settling the difficulty. She wanted to build up the whole mess into a work of art.

The Gainsboroughs had their deferred talk about the Prices' party at breakfast next morning.

"Joseph Price is a perfect ass," said Emma. "And yet you can't be as angry with him as he makes you. I want first to slap him and then to turn him right side up again and put him back in his chair."

"No, I think he is really dreadful," said her mother. "He always was a tiresome little boy, but Cambridge seems to have done him more harm than good. I can't think where he gets that silly way of speaking. It is more like Oxford if anything, but it isn't that either. I wouldn't libel the poor things."

"It is a sort of culture and climbing mixed," said Emma. "Don't you remember when the Mortons came down here to open the Industries? Some of them talked exactly like that, only it wasn't so obvious because it must have been longer since they did it on purpose. It is almost natural to lots of people I am sure. But Joseph Price was very busy with it then. 'Voilà que j'arrive!' his whole face said."

"It was a splendid supper," said Mrs. Gainsborough, "I only wish I could teach Annie to make quenelles like that. I think she must make ours too soft. They always have that curious squashy tastelessness about them, or else too much pepper."

"My dear Beatrice, you'll never do anything with that woman, so long as you live," said the Principal. He tossed a piece of kidney on his plate. "Look at that! Leathery, dry—a kidney

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ought to be a dream of tenderness and blood, just poised—poised, mind, so that the juices soak through—on a piece of toast, neither hard nor soft, browned to a turn——"

"Oh, Father," interrupted his daughter, "do please talk of something else. You make me dribble with envy; I can't bear it."

"Poor darlings!" murmured the mother, compassionate almost to tears. "It is hard on you. I really will speak to her and see if she wouldn't care to go to Mrs. Plumtre; I know they don't care what they eat. I'm not sure even that they're not vegetarians."

"Did you know Mrs. Price has become a vegetarian?" said Emma. "But not the duck-made-of-peas kind; just lettuce and peaches and cheese; except when she goes to London by herself, she told me. Oh dear, I must go but I am so sleepy," she yawned and got up.

"Did you sleep well, darling?" asked her mother anxiously.

"There was a row going on in Millard Street and it woke me up."

"I'd have all those people turned out," said the Principal. "When there's a revolution the houses round here won't be fit to live in. And there's that Cranston next door, throwing out literature that is so much rank poison by its stupidity. It is bad enough to harm even educated idiots, for they take it all in, but at least they are not likely to burn down——"

"If you please, Sir, Mr. Fisk wants to know if he can see you for a moment. He is in the library," said Annie at the door.

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Emma escaped, and as she passed the open door of the library she saw a young man with hair à la Kropotkin and immense spectacles whom she knew to be the secretary of the students' debating society and the son of good Mr. Fisk, plumber and decorator in the neighbourhood.

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CHAPTER X

Mr. Fisk was a good son at home and a pleasant fellow among his friends. Emma, who was liked by the students and went to their gatherings, had often met him. He kept dormice in his bedroom and tended them with care, but if the Communist society he belonged to had called him to do murder in the cause of incomes for all he would have summoned his courage to smite some bald-headed director of a company with a bloody axe. His errand to the Principal that morning was, I am glad to say, of a most peaceful nature, connected with the degree he hoped to take. He met Emma and Teresa the same afternoon at a tea given by some of the students after the meeting of the debating society. Teresa took the cup he offered her, and became fascinated by his withered little face, his immense spectacles and his Kropotkin hair. Her instinct scented suffering and the cage, and she led him on to talk. It must be understood that this was her first experience of his kind and she never forgot it. He began explaining to her, earnestly at first, then excitedly; he struck his knobbly little hands one against the other. "Blood!" he concluded, "blood! there's nothing else for it. We shall give our blood when the time comes and we shall take it ruthlessly—without remorse." Teresa looked at him fixedly, questioning. "I think that

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is very wicked," she said, when she had made up her mind. "You have no business at all to decide that one person shall live and another shan't; it is much too serious. Suppose that another lot of people decided that you must be killed because you got a degree and they didn't?"

"I shan't have been born into my degree when I get it," he said proudly. "I shall have earned it by my own endeavours. The rich have been born into their property for generations. They come into the world nourished on the blood of my fathers. Show me the signs of toil on your hands, if you please," he looked down with a bitter expression at her little hands that held the cup.

"I know," she said humbly, "I often think of it. You needn't point it out. But still you oughtn't to murder anybody. It is not their fault; and anyhow, suppose you burgled my father's house, he would have no right to kill you except in self-defence. I know that is so; a lawyer told me."

"What's the law!" said Mr. Fisk contemptuously. "We're going to alter all that; we're going to make new laws by which man will have the right to live."

"Yes, but not to stop others living," said Teresa "It's silly; you know you can't make laws; and who is going to carry them out if you do? You can't make people do what you want just by telling them that you have made a law. There's the army and navy too—but what is the good of arguing. You must know it is silly."

"The army and navy are also learning to think, you'll find," said Mr. Fisk. "But I don't wish to

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offend you, Miss—er. You are yourself of military stock, I believe?"

"Yes I am, but I don't bother about that. It has got nothing to do with what I think," she replied. "Don't you know——" she went on, with passion beginning to rise in her as his words soaked in, "don't you know, you stupid (she shook him delicately by the sleeve), that all the decent people in England—and English people are decent, not like the beastly people you try to make your hair like—are working their very hardest, day and night, to put things straight? And the fact that some of them have got white hands is all the better, for it means they have money and time to spend on it, and you have only the time to learn by heart what someone else has written. It does make me so angry when I know what the idle rich, as you call them, are doing."

"Bah! charity!" said Mr. Fisk, and he spat some shreds of tobacco from his cigarette neatly into the grate.

"Oh, you can't have thought I was talking about charity," said Teresa with real distress. "Of course I wasn't. It is the very thing I dislike most, except your muddle and murder. And besides that, some of the richest people boast of having been newsboys, and they are often the rudest to their servants and their wives are horrid lazy snobs." Mr. Fisk's little withered face twitched with his anxiety to collect some clear dignified retort.

"Have you ever read much on your subject, may I ask?" he inquired at last. "Have you studied economics? Perhaps you have attended Professor Cranston's lectures?"

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"No, I haven't," she replied.

"Then, pardon me, but I think you are hardly qualified for the argument. Capitalism is a highly intricate subject and should involve deep study. To judge how far it is advisable to submit the control of wages to the State, and also to consider to what extent the right of the individual to determine the extent of his earning capacity should be carried, requires a long training and arduous study. I should be pleased to continue our talk at some other time if convenient to you, and I should be happy to lend books if you are interested."

"Yes," said Teresa with a sigh of fatigue. "I want to know. And you are part of the faces in the fog, I suppose," she added absently, looking at him.

"I beg pardon?"

"I said you were part of the faces in the fog. I used to wonder when we came here what was behind the sort of brick-wall expression that people in the streets and the trams had. When you go to speak in Hyde Park you will see how different your audience is—quite merry in comparison."

"I don't propose to do so at present," said Kropotkin-Fisk, highly offended. "We leave that to the executive. Our body here is concerned at the moment exclusively with study and propaganda." Emma came to look for Teresa and heard the end of the discussion.

"Aren't you paving the way for a new set of class distinctions, Mr. Fisk?" she asked. "What you said just now sounded like it. I hope you will take a lesson from the present evil system and pay yourself properly if you are going to keep to the higher activities."

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"I don't quite follow," said Mr. Fisk, "but if you'll favour us at the next debate and hear my paper, perhaps you will put your question then, and I shall do my best to parry your thrust."

"I don't know what Mrs. Potter would do if Fisk were made Chancellor of the Exchequer under the new régime," said Emma, as she and Teresa walked back together.

"Yes, she would loathe it," Teresa agreed. "But I don't exactly know why. Why do they so often hate their own class in office?"

"Well," said Emma, "I suppose if Eddie Fisk is Chancellor of the Exchequer there's no reason why Albert Potter shouldn't go one better and be King. Mrs. Potter 'never would 'ave 'eld with them Fisks,' you'd find, '—settin' themselves up!'"

"But Communists don't have a King; isn't that the whole point?" Teresa objected.

"They don't until one of them wants to be it," said Emma. "They would call him something else, but some of them would develope an aptitude for ruling. Even apes do."

"But then, I suppose the others could depose him if he wasn't hereditary," said Teresa.

"No, 'Gawd save the Prince o' Wales, bless 'is dear 'eart!' is Mrs. Potter's motto. 'That there Fisk is never going to come it over our Albert, you'll find, Miss,' is what she would say. Ask her the next time you see her."

"Mr. Jorkins doesn't agree with that," Teresa pursued. "When he is out of work the first thing he blames is Parliament. He's dead against it."

"Well, there will always be two opinions about

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everything in a country," said Emma. "You had much better leave them all alone to mess about and let us get on with what we are doing. At present Mr. Fisk is rather like the mouse that dipped its tail in the beer and sucked it. He is looking for the cat, that's all."

"Are you sure?" her friend asked anxiously.

"I am only sure after a party like the Prices' last night," Emma answered. "It will wear off to-morrow, and I shall get cross with Father for talking Conservative intellectualism. I can't see any use in the Prices to-day. They give money when there is a list of donations, and Papa Price just hugs himself when someone comes round for a subscription. He keeps them waiting in his office, and then when he has succeeded in beating them down to less than they asked for and yet finds he is still in the top batch of subscriptions he does think he has been clever. And Mrs. Price and the family! I would really enjoy seeing the girls working in the fur trade instead of wearing coats of it, and I wouldn't wish that to many people. I would like to see them stop cackling and find out how witty they would be on two pennyworth of refuse. Then the next day, perhaps, I meet Lady Varens, whom I don't grudge anything to, because she keeps a lot of people happily employed and really cares for them and buys beautiful things with her money. And after that the Starks turn up—you know—the schoolmistress at St. Angelus' school—you met her at the Dispensary. Mrs. Potter's life is a screaming farce compared to hers, and the Jorkinses are wallowing in wealth, for at least they enjoy themselves at the pictures and the pub. when so disposed."

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"Well, let us add it up," said Teresa. "Under Mr. Fisk's scheme, Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Stark will benefit; Mrs. Price will be altogether wrecked and mangled—she and her family; Lady Varens will live as she would probably be quite content to live now—she never seems to want much—and she would upset the apple carts of a lot of happy dependants. But then there are lots of Potters, lots of Starks, comparatively few Prices, a good many Varenses and not a great many happy dependants, so how does the proportion of benefits work out? I shall have to ask David to unravel it."

"I beg your pardon—David?" asked Emma.

"David Varens," said Teresa. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I only wondered for a moment. Do you go much by what he says?"

"Yes, more than anybody."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Oh, because he is so simple," she answered readily. "I can never tangle him up in a problem. He lays it all out and sorts it into heaps, and then generally sums up by saying there is nothing in it. It is so restful. And then he tells me about phosphates and the habits of the teal. But it is only for the rest to my muddled head that I like it so much. It would never put me off my work."

"Sure?" asked Emma, and she was obliged to accept the assurance when it was given a second time.

As they passed the Vachells' house, which was not far from the Gainsboroughs', Mrs. Vachell was just going in. "Come and have tea with me?" she suggested. Emma explained that they had had

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tea and that she had work to do at home, but Teresa accepted. She was inclined, like Alice in Wonderland, to taste and nibble whatever new thing came her way; she had never been inside the Vachells' house, nor felt that she understood what lay behind the self-possession of the small, graceful lady whom it was said the Professor had found fanning herself by moonlight under an obelisk and brought home. Mrs. Vachell's face was beautiful and full of character but the character was of the reversible kind, of which it is impossible to decide whether it is intended to be good or bad. Such faces seem not, like most faces, to alter gradually with their owner's mind, but to hold always in themselves two distinct characters between which the soul has never chosen a habitation. At death, opinion is generally divided as to which character has been the true one, as in life it was never decided which it would prove to be. "Very like a curious death-mask my father was once given for his study," Susie had described her on first acquaintance. "Dante, or somebody, I think it was, who wrote the 'Inferno.'"

Teresa followed the small gliding figure into the hall and up the stairs, where photographs of Byzantine art and reproductions of drawings from Egyptian tombs were hung right up to the high window that lighted the stairs with a cold north light. The back yards and chimneys of young Millport mixed disagreeably in her mind with the impression of endless centuries of life that she gathered from the procession of antiquity on the walls. There is something alarming to youth in the idea of the early days of a very old person.

The drawing-room was more cheerful, but Mr.

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Vachell's study, which his wife showed her as they passed, made her shiver again. There were objects of stone, of clay, of mildewed bronze; tiny domestic possessions, gifts of love, weapons, tokens of mourning for the dead, provision even for an eternity of wandering beyond the grave. Everywhere were glass cases to preserve the imperishable; the penetrating dust of a new city defiling them notwithstanding. If Teresa had seen Life and Death supping together in the silent room, pledging one another from the old vessels that stood upon the Professor's table, she could not have felt more discomfort than she did.

"Do you like these things?" Mrs. Vachell asked her.

"Perhaps I might if I got to know them," she admitted, "but they scare me rather."

"Come into the drawing-room and have tea then." Mrs. Vachell led the way into the next room and rang the bell. "It is only half-past five; you have lots of time to recover. What have you been doing?"

Teresa told her about the Debating Society and Mr. Fisk. "A horrible young man," said Mrs. Vachell. "He isn't one of my husband's students, luckily, or I should have to ask him to tea. They all get brought here at intervals. They sit about in corners and balance cups on their knees and spill tea into the saucer. I wish you would come and help me next time I have to ask some of them. I believe you would be good to them and teach me not to dislike them so much."

"Very well," said Teresa, "though I am not benevolent. If people won't talk I can't make

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conversation. Why don't you ask Emma? She knows them all."

"That is just why she is no good," Mrs. Vachell explained while she made tea. "It is like a mother and her children in society. They can't talk their own nonsense before an audience, and they can't do the polite to each other. I want you to extract something from the students. They must have interests of the sort that one does not air in the family circle, and strangers are the ideal safety valve for that sort of thing."

"Are many of them like Fisk; wanting blood and new governments and things?" Teresa asked.

"That is one of the things I want to know," Mrs. Vachell answered. "Emma could tell us so far as statistics go, but I want to hear for myself. You know I sit on Committees with Mrs. Carpenter and her lot because I love organisation, and so many of those women who are always talking and ordering and doing the Nosey Parker everywhere are just tools for anybody in the show who has an axe to grind. Do you understand about Boards of Guardians and Select Vestries and all that part?" Teresa answered quickly "Oh, no—nothing whatever. Of course I get inspectors and visitors on my track and I have to help Emma with her reports. But a Board of Guardians means nothing to me except a firm eye and questions that I can't answer. Mother has them to lunch sometimes."

"Can she answer their questions?" asked Mrs. Vachell.

"Surely you know that Mother never answers any questions?" said Teresa very much surprised. "She always tells you something that she thinks

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instead, and makes it seem as if she had answered. But I never know whether it is because she can't or won't."

"I do loathe poverty," Mrs. Vachell said, as if to herself.

Teresa went home very little the wiser for her visit, but she felt greatly discouraged by the extreme age of civilisation as it had been shown to her at the Vachells'. It seemed to have accomplished so little in the time at its disposal.

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CHAPTER XI

EVANGELINE'S baby was a boy, very much to Susie's satisfaction. It would be going too far to say that it had been a grief to her that she had no son, for grief and she had met only on the most courtly terms since she outgrew the realities of childhood which no one escapes. Her philosophy had developed early, and since then she had met grief on the terms of cavalier and lady. He had bowed to her and fingered his sword; she had curtseyed, smiled and turned her back on him, with perhaps a coy glance of mockery above her fan. But he paid his first visit to Evangeline, equipped for battle, when her son was a few months old. Evan began making plans one day for his future, as affectionate fathers will, and the discussion, begun amicably, ended in such a storm of passion from Evangeline as surprised and horrified him. A doctor would have said that she was still weak and unbalanced after young Ivor's birth; the fact was that resentment suppressed or tided over on many occasions had accumulated, and was now being paid in one sum. Her natural gaiety had made her fairly independent when it was only she who was to suffer from Evan's severity; but when it went beyond her to the child she became savage in the defence of her offspring. This situation is as old as the hills—older than man—and the true simile of the tigress

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has become so hackneyed by being tacked on to every thwarted feminine instinct that it hardly arrests the eye on a printed page; but its accuracy is age-proof. The occasion for her outburst was as trifling as it could be; it generally is when a storm is long brewing. Evan had chosen for his peroration the unfortunate words, "—and we shall teach him discipline early."

He spoke from a full heart and meant, as Queen Elizabeth is said to have performed upon the virginals, "excellently well." Evangeline pictured the young creature that was to have been a marvel of joy, crushed by fear of its natural friends, pursued by something dark and threatening that was called "Right," so that all sweetness of the day that was called "Wrong" must be loved and followed in secret. She pictured the child lonely in a garden, with a dog for his friend and his father for an enemy, and she herself, perhaps, under suspicion as being in the confidence of the enemy. He would be like Romulus and Remus, she thought, as her horror gathered volume. She was always a very simple thinker. In any crisis her mind's eye looked over a wide space of whatever emotion was in possession of her, and some episode, historical, literary or personal, often arose before her as a point of focus for the end she was aiming at. Just now she was overwhelmed with pity for the awful loneliness of a child's nature with no human love to comfort it. She knew herself what a place animals can take at such times. Romulus and Remus had been mothered by a wolf, but must her Ivor be abandoned to such a makeshift, while she, adoring him with all her heart and soul, was chained by Evan to the Juggernaut's

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car that was to pursue the child through life? At the moment she pictured her husband's religion as an all-devouring monster.

He sat meanwhile silent, frowning at her grief and wondering how his domestic security had come to collapse like this at the breath of a high ideal. Was his wife wholly worldly and given over to the worship of self-indulgence? Did she mean to bring the boy up to be a pampered young ass with no sense of duty to God or man? He said nothing, but thought very dark thoughts.

Presently Evangeline's indomitable optimism came back to the rescue. She had exhausted her emotion; Romulus and Remus had played their part in her imagination and retired. Pity remained, but there was also hope and the fighting strength of the jungle mother. She would remain Ivor's mother and play the part of the wolf as well. Evan should never get at her darling while she lived; she would throw herself between them. It was not until very much later in the tragedy that she began to think of using cunning in her defence. At present she had no idea of decoying an enemy away; that instinct had not yet been roused in her so she still fought in the open. After the outburst of protest with which she first met his innocent remark, and the passionate tears that followed, she cheered up again and was prepared to shake hands.

"It will be all right," she said confidently. "I know you love him as much as I do."

"I love him more, for I care what becomes of him," was Evan's grave reply.

"You are not going to beat him the first

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time he disobeys you?" she asked in renewed panic.

"Control yourself, for goodness sake," he replied impatiently. "He is only a baby. I have nothing to do with your nursery arrangements. Let him tyrannise over you and make his life and yours a misery. There is time enough for you to think over whether I am right, and to see the result of depriving him of all means of defending himself against ill-fortune in this world and damnation in the next."

"And when he is older, if I still think you are wrong——?" she pursued breathlessly.

"Then—I am sorry, Evangeline—I shall not hesitate to remove him from your charge."

"You couldn't!" she exclaimed. "They would never let you!"

"I don't know the exact law, but I fancy I could safeguard him and still allow you to see him in an ordinary way without your being in authority. But all this is absurd. We are making ourselves miserable about nothing. Go up to him now and spoil him to your heart's content. But think over what I have said. You have so much good in you, Evangeline, if you would only not let yourself be carried away by this terror of all pain and discomfort."

"I didn't make a sound when Ivor was born," she said in amazement.

"I know. Don't think you hadn't my admiration because I didn't say so. I was thinking of the pains of self-sacrifice and obedience to rules not understood."

"If I can keep Ivor by bearing those, too, I will," she assured him.

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"Of course you can, darling," he said, misunderstanding. "We shall all be happy at last, you will see."

At Christmas they went again to stay with Evangeline's parents. Ivor found his grandmother all that he could possibly desire. He fell madly in love with her and she made very little attempt to conceal her triumph from his nurse. Ivor loved the nurse dearly and she loved him, so that altogether he never suffered a moment's anxiety during his visit. War was declared over him; a long and bitter war as it turned out; yet his life became for the time being all the sweeter in consequence. Susie entered the battlefield on the side of Evangeline and motherhood in general, of "not worrying about things that can't be helped," and of opposition to men who "will be disagreeable." Love, wounded by Ivor's mischievous treachery at times when his grandmother's blandishments must be left for sleep and exercise, brought nurse in on the side of the father and discipline. It was she who had to endure the nerve-racking screams and struggles that took place on the other side of the drawing-room door, and the wakeful nights caused by excitement and "the very purest chocolate" from Grannie's drawer which Ivor had learned to open so cleverly. She had to put up with the gentlest and most persistent advice, with seeing windows covertly opened or shut when otherwise arranged by her with the tenderest care for Ivor's comfort, with clothes added to or removed from what he was wearing. Mothers of any civilised country will bear witness that such trifles are more dangerous to domestic peace than the franker brawls of the

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gutter. If Susie and the nurse had let themselves go with the same *abandon* as the ladies of honest Robert's beat, Ivor would have suffered less in the end and his father and mother might have called quits after the exchange of a black eye and a broken nose. As it was, Evangeline took no part in the daily duels so long as her son remained unscathed between the contending parties; but she noted Evan's silent criticism. She saw that every scene of wilfulness strengthened his position against her, and her heart hardened towards him. Once when Mrs. Vachell asked her to lunch she arrived there so discouraged that she could hardly keep up a pretence of other conversation.

"I am very sorry to be so stupid," she said at last, "but I am tired to death. Mother and Ivor's nurse do get on so badly, though I believe it is really one-sided because Mother seems not to notice at all; but she puts nurse's back up and Ivor takes advantage of it to get everything he wants, and I don't think she would stay through another visit. Evan thinks it is my fault and that I spoil Ivor. I do so hate anger and fuss. What would you do?"

"I should tell the nurse that she must be polite to your mother or go," said Mrs. Vachell.

"I wouldn't do that for a thousand pounds," said Evangeline. "She worships Ivor and would give her life for him I really think."

"You would easily find another who would do just the same," Mrs. Vachell remarked, "and it might be good for him not to depend so much on one person."

"No, no," Evangeline repeated. "I won't do

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that. But people can make one's life a burden, can't they! Just by disapproving."

"I never allow anyone's vagaries to bother me," said Mrs. Vachell coolly. "I do the best I can and am proof against black looks. Angry faces are as soon dead as merry ones and their memory is not kept green."

"Do you think a man's feeling about children is always different from a woman's?" Evangeline asked presently.

"Yes, very different," Mrs. Vachell replied. "I think, if you ask me, they are the most ram-headed, firebrand, poker-fingered lumps of folly that could have been planted on an unhappy world to wreck its comfort." She spoke in a low, deliberate voice. "Damned fools," she added lightly. "Don't you think so in your heart?"

Evangeline was just going to answer when she remembered her husband's description of Mrs. Vachell after the Prices' party, "intelligent" and "cultivated" and "talks like a lady." She saw a very old mistake for the first time, fresh in all its eternal comedy, and was lifted right out of her present difficulties by the amusement of it. "How gloriously funny!" she exclaimed.

"What is funny?" Mrs. Vachell asked, a little displeased.

"That you should think that, and—Evan was so delighted with you!" Evangeline blurted out.

"Pooh!" said Mrs. Vachell. "I suppose you think I was trying to please him?"

"Oh, gracious, no," said the poor girl. "I told him he knew nothing about you."

"Did you? Why did you say that?"

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"Oh, because I knew you don't believe in any of the things that he likes."

"My dear girl, how can you know that? What don't I believe in?"

"I mean his kind of religion, and rectitude, and making oneself uncomfortable about nothing, and all that misunderstanding of everybody and looking out for badness."

"You don't need to look far," said Mrs. Vachell.

"Do you think so?" said Evangeline, surprised. "Now that is just what I don't. I think there would be hardly any badness if people didn't make it by believing in it. But why do you think men are so stupid? You can't have thought so in the war——" She became suddenly indignant.

"If men had not been what they are there would have been no war," said Mrs. Vachell.

"Oh, but—good gracious! Look how women fight!" Evangeline exclaimed in amazement, "and all about nothing! Men fight *for* something, and—I can't bear to hear you say beastly things about them when they did——" Her voice broke and she stopped. Her eyes were bright and troubled as she looked at Mrs. Vachell in the hope of having mistaken her words.

"Don't take what I say so much to heart," Mrs. Vachell said gently. "You are a very feminine woman. You ought to turn your sympathies on to your own sex, who have to endure seeing their lovers and sons killed because countries are governed by brutes and knaves and idiots. When your baby goes to war and your husband urges him on with applause and he leaves a wife and probably two or three ruined women behind him——"

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Evangeline's tears had vanished in utter astonishment at the novelty of this view and her own fundamental disbelief in its reality. There was nothing in it to stir her passion as it was remote from anything she could ever feel and she did not believe anyone else felt it either.

"Of course Ivor will go without any egging on," she said. "I should die of shame if I had even to open the door for him. And as for ruined women—Evan is not like that nor are my people, any of them. I don't see why Ivor should grow up a pig any more than they did. But"—she remembered again what had amused her—"I do wish you would come and say all that to Evan. I do want to prove to him that I was right, and of course I can't tell him what you said. He wouldn't believe it and would think I was being like a woman."

This last slip of the tongue was unfortunate and might have led to such divergence of opinion as would have deprived Evangeline of those further talks with Mrs. Vachell that had so much influence on her future. But they heard the front door bell ring and Mrs. Vachell said, "That is probably Mr. Fisk. He said he might come this afternoon. I wish you would stay a little; he might really interest you."

"Who is he?" Evangeline asked.

"One of the stupidest of the students, but a reformer——" Mr. Fisk was announced. He began of course about the weather and asked Evangeline whether she had "been long in these parts," and so on; he omitted none of the steps to acquaintance by which his kindred are accustomed to reach the more companionable stage of

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invitations to "tea and s'rimps." Mrs. Vachell soon became impatient and cut him short. "Don't let us be social any more, Mr. Fisk," she suggested, "but tell us how your campaign is getting on."

He plunged at once into oratorical phrases and Evangeline listened, bewildered. Mrs. Vachell led him on by subtle questions to the law of marriage.

"Are you in favour of the coming of women?" he asked Evangeline.

"Where to?" she asked. She was deeply interested.

"What people call feminism," Mrs. Vachell explained. "Don't you want to take your share in the world?"

"What sort of share?" said Evangeline. "I thought I had got one; but I am too stupid to do things, if you mean having a profession."

"Have you ever tried, may I ask?" Mr. Fisk nquired. "Perhaps you hardly know your powers."

"You like people to be happy, I know," said Mrs. Vachell. "Why not take steps to make them so? Don't you find, for instance, that men have too much power over their families?"

Evangeline's private anxieties awoke. "Do you mean when they can say how children are to be brought up?"

"Yes, that among other things." Mrs. Vachell observed her closely.

"They oughtn't to," said Evangeline. "They don't understand——"

"Have you read Iris Smith's pamphlet on the matriarchate?" asked Mr. Fisk.

"No, I haven't read anything deep," she replied. "What is the thing? You don't mean

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that sort of solid turquoise?" She supposed him to have changed the subject out of modesty. He looked scared and Mrs. Vachell laughed.

"Mrs. Hatton is only a potential ally," she explained to him. "She has the real instinct, which is worth all the learning in the world. Books are only useful for downing the catchwords of stupid people who won't think. How would you like it," she continued to Evangeline, "if your husband insisted on your boy being brought up at some particular school and you knew that he would be bullied and misunderstood there, and that all the tenderness you love would be crushed out of him; and suppose you found after he went that he came back despising you in his heart for being of the inferior sex, though he still caressed you as a dear old silly whom he could get material comforts from and put down with one hand in any discussion?"

"Boys aren't like that," said Evangeline frowning. "I know they are not—not English boys, anyhow," she added with a look at Mr. Fisk's hair, to which she had taken a sudden dislike.

"They have been just like that since a date so far back that I don't believe you have ever heard of it," Mrs. Vachell assured her. "That is why you will find it interesting to read books some day."

Evangeline stayed to tea and came back more incensed than ever against Evan's theories and more than ever in love with his masculinity.

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CHAPTER XII

ANYONE entering the Prices' house on any Wednesday afternoon between 3.30 and 6 would hear from the staircase and even from the front door a chatter and clatter of cups and conversation and shrill laughter. In a short time the drawing-room bell would ring, a door would open upstairs and louder sounds of talking would burst out; then one of the Price girls would be heard to say, "Well, goodbye, then. Tuesday week," or something like that, and a female form, expensively dressed, the remains of a farewell smile still on the face, would pass down the stairs and probably meet the maidservant on her way up with another batch from the front door. On some Wednesdays as many as thirty women called on Mrs. Price. Susie, who "believed in keeping up with people," as she said, was there one day soon after Evangeline had left her. The Prices made much of her because of her triple connection with Millport, London and the county, and the girls described Cyril as "perfectly killing!" They had a great respect for him as soon as they saw that he had none whatever for them.

Perhaps it was some survival of the days when slavery was upheld from the pulpit by a man of God in their city that gave one or two of the older Millport families their exaggerated esteem for an

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impressive manner. They knew by ancestral experience that the top dog is the thing to be. They sat as near the top as they could and gazed with admiration at those who pressed on them from above. No one who understood Cyril could suspect him of being impressive, but he took no interest in the Prices, so their natural inference from his behaviour was that he must be used to something better than themselves, and that would be something very good indeed. The train of thought runs easily to the conclusion that Cyril was worth cultivating. Half the things he said would have convicted him of "giving himself airs" had he been a poor man and polite to the Prices, but, "Have you heard what the General said?" they repeated to one another after every occasion when they met him. Even such trifles as "what he said when Father offered him a cigar at the Club," were reported, and the answer, "No, thanks; have you seen the paper?" produced an avalanche of delight.

"But what did he mean, dear?" asked poor Mrs. Price. "I don't see anything particular in that."

"Oh, mother! Of course he wanted to get rid of Dad; can't you see? 'Have you seen the paper!' I think it is delicious. You can just imagine him handing it over and sloping off."

On this afternoon Mrs. Price sat down beside Susie and began to make herself agreeable. "Your daughter has left you now, hasn't she, Mrs. —er?" she began. "I hope Drage suits her. My son was there for a time and didn't care for it."

"It is not a beautiful place, of course," Susie replied, "but to see those boys back from the war

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enjoying themselves so much is as good as any scenery. Your son told Evangeline of the unfortunate accident that prevented him from going out. She was so sorry for him."

"Well, I wasn't sorry," said Mrs. Price. "I think the whole arrangement of conscription was scandalous. They took people who were absolutely necessary for carrying on what business there was, and sent them out. Joseph has a very weak throat and would have been absolutely useless, as I told him; though he had made up his mind to go. However, it is all over now and I hope to goodness they will get all the labour troubles settled soon. The price of everything is dreadful. I don't know how we are to go on living."

"By the bye," asked Susie, "has anything been settled about your taking Aldwych?"

An unpleasant recollection rose in Mrs. Price's mind. Higgins had reported to one of the maids after the party "how disrespectful that military gentleman that came had spoke" about wealth in general and the Prices in particular. He had retailed Cyril's remarks about getting the smell of money out of the house and the likelihood of the Prices demoralising the Aldwych tenants like the plague. Higgins had told the infamous tale three times at supper, and Hopkins, Mrs. Price's maid, had repeated it to her mistress. The young Prices had heard of it, but paid little attention. It only stung them to further admiration of Cyril, for since the Profiteering Act had been passed and half the jokes in *Punch* were about people who looked rather like Dad and Mother they had begun to feel that the gilt on their gingerbread had better

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be covered a little to prevent rubbing. The parents, however, did not like it.

"I don't know whether we can afford to take it at all," Mrs. Price continued. "It is only people who have made money in the war that can do that sort of thing now. Of course Mr. Price actually lost more than he made, and with the income tax and everything his idea was really to give up and go into the country. Aldwych would need a great deal of keeping up."

"Would it?" said Susie. "I daresay. But you would find the life so delightful, wouldn't you? I think the unrest in a big town is so trying, and the unemployment makes it so much worse." Mrs. Gainsborough was sitting on a sofa at her left hand, talking to a clergyman's wife, and there was a sudden silence as Susie spoke. The young Prices had gone into the little room beyond to discuss some theatricals they were getting up for a charity.

"Why does the Principal allow Mr. Cranston to go on as he does?" Mrs. Price asked, turning to Mrs. Gainsborough.

"He doesn't," she replied distractedly. "It drives him nearly wild, but he can't do anything."

"He is making it much harder for everybody," said Mrs. Abel, the clergyman's wife. "My husband says he is doing incalculable harm in our neighbourhood. They are not the very poorest people there and they all have time to read and they are great orators—"

"Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Vachell," the maid announced.

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"Ah, this is delightful!" Mrs. Carpenter exclaimed, advancing first and shaking hands with everybody. "You are so wise to go on keeping to one day," she said to Mrs. Price. "It is almost the only way of seeing one's friends. I should love it if I had nothing to do, but if I tried to keep an afternoon to myself someone would be sure to call a special meeting somewhere and I should have to go off. And how is your dear girl? (To Susie.) Wrapped up in hubby and the baby, I suppose. I hope he is not getting his teeth too soon; it is such a pity when they do; they only decay earlier. And how is Emma? (To Mrs. Gainsborough.) I meet her here, there and everywhere. I think she does too much. She has not been accustomed to so much drudgery as an old soldier's daughter like me. Papa used to hear us our Greek Testament every morning at half-past six. You know those were the good old days at Universities! He never gave it up even when he went to India. Then we had our classes and our riding-master and the old drill-sergeant, and my mother used to take us round among the wives and tell them what to do with their babies. Girls haven't the same strength now. I make Baba lie down for an hour every day after lunch while I write letters, and I am sure Emma ought to do the same. And how is your parish, Mrs. Abel?" She settled down at last to one victim and let the others go.

Presently they heard men's voices in the hall, some heavy stumbling upstairs and a door shut. Mrs. Price listened, hesitated and rang the bell. "Has anything happened, Gregory?" she asked the maid.

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"Mr. Joseph, ma'am, brought home a young man who got knocked down by the car. He wished you not to be troubled as there is nothing serious and he is expected to be all right in a few minutes. Mr. Varens is with him in Mr. Price's study."

"I had better go and see what is the matter," said Mrs. Price. "Don't disturb yourselves; I shall be back in a minute." She was gone nearly a quarter-of-an-hour, but her guests waited on. Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Vachell had begun an animated conversation on strikes and Susie was listening. When Mrs. Price came back she looked quite scared.

"It is a young man called Fisk," she said. "David Varens says he is one of the students and you would know him," she turned to Mrs. Gainsborough. "He is quite himself again, but he was stunned for the moment and I don't think he knew where he was. He was talking a great deal in a very noisy way about blood, and there wasn't a scratch on him! I have telephoned for the doctor to make quite sure he is all right, though he says he can go home. Do you know anything of him?"

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Gainsborough, "and if he is talking about blood you may be sure he is quite well. He thinks of very little else; it is almost a pity in some ways if he hasn't lost any. We all know about him and he is the greatest nuisance and trouble to my husband. How did it happen?"

"Joseph was driving Mr. Varens back to tea here and the young man came out from behind some cart when they were crossing the road. He

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was not thinking where he was going and walked right into the car; but fortunately it was hardly moving."

"Dear me, what a shock it must have given him!" said Susie.

"Have you got brandy in the house?" asked Mrs. Abel.

"Of course we have, thank you," Mrs. Price was greatly offended at the suggestion of such incompleteness in a perfect establishment. As bad as asking King George whether he kept a hair brush. "That is not the point. Do you mean to say that he is dangerous, Mrs. Gainsborough?"

"Not more than a flying soda-water bottle," she answered nervously. The little contretemps about the brandy had flurried her and probably suggested the comparison.

"I think Teresa mentioned him once," said Susie, who always came to the rescue at any hint of dispute. "A Communist, isn't he?"

"A very determined one," said Mrs. Vachell.

"What nonsense!" Mrs. Price exclaimed. "A great many of my relations are Communists and I am quite sure this young man doesn't look like one. He must be pretending." Joseph came in just then.

"The doctor has come,' he remarked, "and says he'd better go t' bed. There's nothing the matter, but David says he'll leave a note on the chap's people on th' way back. They live close by th' station. Kerious sort of f'ller, he is. Called me 'Moloch' when he w's coming round. Who was Moloch, d'you remember?" he asked Mrs. Vachell. "I can't just get it for th' moment."

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"Something to do with blood, wasn't he?" Mrs. Vachell suggested.

"Ah, thaat's it," Joseph replied contentedly. "Script'ral allusion 'f some sort I w's sure. He's talking about blood all th' time and not a scratch on him anywhere. 't's most kerious."

"Some people have such a prejudice against cars, particularly if they are not in them," said Susie. "And if he is a Communist he is quite sure to think he ought to have one. And so ought everybody, I do think, if they can. When cheap ones are made in large quantities I am sure people will be happier and more contented."

"Except those who make them," said Mrs. Vachell. She was standing up by the mantelpiece, fingering a matchbox on the corner. "Or shall we contrive that Mr. Fisk gets inside one as soon as possible and you and I take a turn at the workshops, Mrs. Fulton?"

"No, I think we are all much better where we are," Susie replied smiling. "Every man to his last. But I do certainly think that conditions ought to be made better. I believe if all that sort of thing were arranged everyone would settle down much more comfortably. Beauty is such a happy thing. I find, myself, that I don't mind how simply I live so long as I have music and books and so on and if I can get out into the country sometimes. These ugly streets are so depressing."

"You must meet Mr. Cranston and see what you can do with him," said Mrs. Vachell.

"I don't think Mrs. Fulton would get on with him at all," put in Mrs. Gainsborough in a great flurry. Her imagination flew to a possible scene

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of inextricable confusion and she turned quite red with embarrassment.

"No, do, Mrs. Fulton," said Mrs. Abel anxiously. "I wish you would speak to him and see if you can't influence him. What you say is perfectly true. My husband would be so grateful to you."

"Well, I hope you will ask me to come too," said Mrs. Carpenter. "I can support you with all the facts if you want them. Mr. Cranston talks the greatest nonsense. He should come down to our place and talk to the women I have to deal with and get at the practical side of what they want. He would find that if he stopped the men drinking and made them bring home their wages there would be plenty—abundance even—to live on; and if it were made a criminal offence for a man to run after a young girl——"

"Or for a girl to run after a young man," Mrs. Gainsborough interrupted nervously. "They so often do, you know."

"Not unless they are taught to do it," Susie objected, her eyes wide with reproach.

Joseph Price sat on the back of a sofa looking from one lady to the other and jingling the money in his pockets. His mother was waiting to ring the bell and have them all shown out. The girls had come from the other room and were standing at the back wondering what it was all about.

"I am afraid we must be going," said Mrs. Gainsborough, feeling that she had not said the right thing and wishing Emma were there.

"You m'st have a talk to Fisk," said Joseph to Susie. "You'd like him; he's really a very

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int'resting f'ller. I wonder if he's still talking about blood; p'raps I'd better go and see."

"Well, you will come and meet Mr. Cranston, won't you, Mrs. Fulton?" Mrs. Vachell said. She held out her hand to say good-bye to Mrs. Price and they all went downstairs.

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CHAPTER XIII

TERESA was staying with Evangeline at Drage. Evangeline had received a letter from her a week before saying, " I want you to ask me to stay with you for a few days. David has asked me to marry him and I can hardly make you understand how much I want to and at the same time explain why I have refused. You will think it silly, because you don't take sayings literally and there are some that I can't take generally. If I had a lot of money I should see written up on the walls all round me, " Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.' I couldn't live in the middle of it and just dole out what was left from the expenses of a big house. David won't see it. If only his father had not died! Then we should have been married and I couldn't have gone back; whatever we settled David and I could not have parted. Though that is just cowardice. It is that I hate having the choice when I am so perfectly certain which I ought to do. David says the money he would get for the estate would make as much difference to the poor as a parcel of dressings in a battle, but I think that is the weakest possible argument, that because one person can't do much no one is to do anything; everyone has to go as far as they can see and nothing less is enough. He says the money is more useful where it is, in teaching people to make the best out

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of the land. I asked if we couldn't at least sell the big house and live in a cottage or perhaps use the house as a convalescent home for mothers and children; but he says, No. It is full of lovely things, hundreds of years old, that belonged to his family and that he has the right to enjoy as much as if he had bought them himself. He says that if Mr. Price bought them, as he would like to do, he wouldn't either give them away or sell them directly. He doesn't care about them, but he would keep them out of vanity and hand them on to Joseph, who would probably sell them to the Jews and they would be lost all over the world. I said, wasn't that a good thing, as then so many people could each have a little bit and enjoy it, but he said there was no sense in that; they looked much better all together where they were. Of course you and I have never had a family tree, so I don't suppose we understand any more than Mrs. Potter does—though, if you come to think of it, whenever she puts that absurd old tea caddy of hers up the spout she always gets it out again because it was her grandmother's. But Mother found out about David and she goes on talking very gently and persistently, and tells me I am only a little girl and can't possibly think out things that even the greatest men don't agree about, and she doesn't see that that is not the point. I have to follow what my bones say is the only decent thing to do. She does get on my nerves so, and I know you won't argue if I ask you not. I believe I shall get some support out of Evan, as he does so believe in anything uncomfortable, doesn't he? And this is so uncomfortable I am nearly mad."

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Evangeline had written at once, offering all the welcome and freedom Teresa could want, and Evan received her with affection. He liked her thoroughly. She found an atmosphere of tension and sadness in the house that she had not expected, neither could she see how it came there, for Evangeline seemed on good terms with her husband, and Ivor was well and in the highest spirits; except when his father came into the nursery, which was not very often. Then the nurse grew troubled and fidgeted the child and he became exacting and contentious, speaking rudely to her, which was quite unusual with him. One day Teresa and Evangeline were there playing with him in perfect peace, when Evan came in. It was about half-past three on a foggy November afternoon. "Why isn't that boy out?" he asked his wife.

"He has been out," she answered, "but Nurse brought him in as it is so foggy and he has had a cold."

"We were always turned out in all weathers up in Yorkshire, and it never did us any harm," said Evan.

"Let's turn that gun further round this way, Ivor," said Evangeline, going on with the game. "You see it would be firing right into its own trenches; try a shot and you will see." Evan looked on.

"Here, old man, I'll show you," he said, and he took hold of the gun.

"No, don't!" shouted Ivor in great excitement. "Put it down! I've put it there mythelf."

"Yes, but you haven't done it properly," his father said, beginning to move it.

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"Leave it, I thay," Ivor screamed, almost beside himself. "Get out from my gunth——" He pushed his father away impatiently. "And you get out too," he commanded Evangeline, pushing her also, suddenly tired of visitors. "All go away downthtairth." Tears of aggravation were in his eyes, but he kept them back.

"You are not to speak to your mother like that, sir," said Evan. "Apologise to her at once." Ivor had no idea what apologising meant, but it sounded horrid. "Than't," he said.

"Oh, do go away, please, Evan," said Evangeline. "We're coming down to tea presently. Do go and ring for it."

"Not till that boy has apologised for his rudeness," said Evan. Ivor had resumed his game alone and was getting interested and remote. Evidently this tiresome family of his were going to fight among themselves and leave him in peace.

"You are sorry, aren't you?" his mother said, then in a pleading tone: "You didn't mean to push, did you?"

"Eth," said Ivor, as he place the contested gun carefully back in the position from which his father had moved it.

"Nonsense," said Evangeline temptingly. "Come here and kiss me and make it up."

"Take—away—your—'uthband," Ivor said slowly, as if he were repeating a lesson to himself. His mother and his aunt shouted with delight and could hardly believe that the child had meant it. Ivor's face was quite unmoved. "Come on," said Evangeline, seizing Evan by the arm and dragging him out of the room. "You can't stay after that."

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But he neither smiled nor answered. He followed them downstairs and did not speak for some time.

When he had gone out again after tea Evangeline sat for a time looking idly into the fire. "Dicky," she began after a little while, "whatever you do don't marry a man with whom you daren't be truthful. Before I talk to Evan I have to treat what I want to say as if it were to a foreigner and had to be translated into his language. First I have to cut out the bits that won't do because of the prejudices he was brought up in. Then I have to change whole chunks that he would associate with other women whom he dislikes and who have said the same things; we do, as a sex, rather talk about the same things as each other, don't we? But when he has heard some gas-bag of a creature say, 'Oh, Captain Hatton, I do love children!' (which she probably does) he thinks the whole subject exhausted, and shamefully exhausted too! So if any woman uses the word 'love' at any time afterwards he looks the subject up in his mind and finds a note, 'memo. gas. Mrs. T.' and there's an end of it; so in future, when I want to say anything about love I have to use another word. It is very hampering."

"But you can't go on using new words about everything," said Teresa.

"No, but you see in the kind of things he talks to men about the words can't very well be misused. If you are describing what has gone wrong with an engine you can only use words like 'plug' and 'spring' and 'valve,' that have only one meaning. Even a lawyer couldn't say, 'I suggest that when you tell the Court that the valve was defective you inferred that John Brown's baby had a wart on its

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nose.' But that is what Evan does if I try to tell him what Ivor is thinking—things that I know quite well because I remember being a child, and he doesn't."

"Yes, I see," said Teresa.

"Well, let us get on to David," said her sister. "Does what I have said apply to him or not?"

"No, not at all," (very emphatically).

"Then why doesn't he do what you want?"

"Not because he doesn't understand, but because he doesn't agree. It is rather like statistics; two people can add up the same figures and prove different results with them, one showing that trade is prospering and the other that it is going all wrong."

"You know, I agree with him," said Evangeline. "I don't think you could do any good by selling everything. There is nothing you can give to people to make them happy if they don't want to be. I have found that out."

"But the people I am talking about do want to be happy," Teresa argued passionately. "They are starving for what other people are throwing away because they can't use all of it."

"I saw in the paper the other day that if you divided up everyone's money there would be only thirteen-and-something a day—or a week—or it might have been a year—I forget; but only a very little like that for each person."

"It wasn't finance that I was thinking of," said Teresa, "I know it is no good trying to settle that. There is a horrid boy at the University called Fisk. He is always telling me that I haven't studied the subject, and he is going quite mad himself over it. He devours Mr. Cranston's literature and coughs

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it up again much the worse for wear. Joseph Price ran over him once, ages ago, and brought him back to their house in the middle of a tea-party. Mother was there, and David told me all about it afterwards. Of course Mother told us nothing except that Mrs. Price got frightened at Fisk talking so much about blood, as he always does when he is excited, and that she had said that he couldn't possibly be a Communist, because some of her own relations were; wasn't that like her? You know they were all very rich, so I have wondered since how they did mean to divide up their money. But whichever way it was they don't seem to have done it. Fisk stayed in the Prices' house for two days, and at last Mrs. Price sent for Emma, as he seemed to have settled down there very comfortably and said he was too ill to move. I think Joseph encouraged him because he thought it was the kind of thing his dear Mortons, whom he imitates, would do; keep a revolutionary in bed in their own house and egg him on and feed him up and get lots of notoriety out of him and then manage to get out of any trouble that they raised later on. David says if there were a revolution the Mortons would probably pretend to head it and then slip off to another country where it is all comfortable under a despot."

"What does Father say?" Evangeline asked curiously.

"I haven't told him about David," Teresa replied.

"Why not? He always understands, and if, as you say, Mother knows, she is sure to have told him."

"No, there are some things he doesn't see at all, and one of them is slums. They don't worry him an atom unless he has to walk through them, and

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if he does that he complains that everyone wears fish next the skin, and wants to go home another way. He never will take the trouble to think about anything horrid that he can't help. I asked him once what he would do if he had to live in a place like that—we were in some horrible street near the docks—and he said that it was impossible that he should have to, because then he would be somebody else; he explained that he would have been given gin in his bottle as a baby, and therefore would have grown up quite contented with it all. Of course he would side with David if I told him. The idea of Mr. Price having anything to do with hounds would prevent him from listening to arguments even from an archangel."

If Teresa had but known, her parents were at that very moment discussing the same subject. It was after dinner, and Susie had mentioned that she met Lady Varens that afternoon opening a bazaar. "They are going to let Aldwych to the Prices for three years," she said. "David refuses to sell it, but he has suddenly come round to the idea of letting it. I suppose the Prices hope to be able to buy it in the end."

"Well, I'm damned sorry," he said with a sigh.

"I am afraid it is partly Dicky's fault, Cyril," she suggested gently.

"How's that?" he asked. "You haven't sold her to that young Price, have you, Sue? I couldn't stand that."

"I wonder if you will ever understand that marriage is not a question of bargaining and arrangement," said his wife impatiently. "It is really a pity, I think, that I wasn't able to provide you

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with cattle instead of children. You would have understood me far better if I had been a slave or an animal."

"We might try," he suggested. "It is not too late to add to your list of female impersonations. But you haven't answered my question."

"I forget what it was," she answered gravely.

"Whether you had bestowed (we will say if you prefer it) Teresa on Joseph Price."

"I have no reason to suppose that he has asked her to marry him," said Susie.

"Then we may take it that is all right," he said with relief. "She would never invite herself. I am always glad to see Mammon spread his net in vain for your sex, Sue. It makes the world so much brighter and better. But what did you mean that Dicky had done?"

"She has refused David; why I don't know."

"I am really sorry about that," he said after a pause.

"I suppose you wouldn't tell her so, would you?" she asked hopefully.

"Of course not. If marriage means as much to a girl as you say it does, she isn't likely to invest in a husband to amuse dear old Dad."

"No, but you might tell her. Girls are so silly."

"Well, you astonish me!" said Cyril.

"Why? Surely you must know they are."

"I thought the feminine instinct was infallible on every subject."

"She can't be expected to have experience," said Susie.

"Then the divine gift is just a happy little flame that you can blow out when you don't want to see

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it, is that it? You can just ask Mother what she saw when she was a girl? And that was a devil of a lot," he added reflectively.

"Then it is no good asking you to take the matter seriously?" she inquired.

"She is not going to stay away long, is she?" Cyril asked.

"I shouldn't think so. I believe Evan's sisters are going to stay there next week."

"Well, absence makes the heart grow fonder," he observed. "I am very sorry about Dicky. I don't think you made a great success there, Sue."

"I had nothing to do with it," she protested. "I implored her to wait. If anything it was your fault for having Evan always about here."

"Now how could I help that?' Cyril inquired. "I couldn't have a maiden lady as my A.D.C., and if I had, you would have said that I taught her to be wicked. As it was, I just tried not to worry."

"Is there anything else I can say for you to twist round, Cyril dear?" asked his wife. "I am delighted to give you opportunities for your wit, but sometimes it is hardly possible to open one's mouth."

"I am sorry," he said penitently. "I don't want to tease you, really. I love everything you say. But when you blamed me for not keeping Hatton in a cupboard like a bottle of whisky labelled 'not to be taken,' I thought you were coming it a little strong."

"They don't seem to me to be very happy," said Susie, prepared to start again amicably. "I wish he wouldn't carry religion quite so far."

"How far does he carry it?" asked Cyril "You

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see, he never had occasion to bring it to me at all, so I don't know."

"Oh quite ridiculous lengths," Susie replied. "He thinks quite a number of things wrong."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Cyril uproariously. "Well done, Sue. That's a topper! Ha! ha!"

"My dear Cyril, what on earth is the matter?" she asked, quite bewildered.

"Nothing," he replied gravely, as he poured himself out his usual evening drink. "My mind wanders sometimes. Go on, my dear. Evan is suffering from moral unrest, you say?"

"Yes, he used even to think it wrong sometimes when I had dear Baby in my room and played with him. I think it is dreadful not to want to see a little child happy."

"I don't know that I would trust you to bring up a boy, Sue," he said candidly. "You see, your idea of a male is to let it have all it wants so long as it is only a matter of a little song and dance. But when it begins to want things a bit nearer the bone, you pull it up short and it gets confused. Very few women know how to go on as they meant to begin."

"I suppose you mean 'begin as they mean to go on,'" said Susie, "but you are quite wrong. Men understand what women mean quite well from the beginning."

"I meant what I said," Cyril persisted. "Go on as they meant to begin. They meant to begin with a carnival and to end in Lent."

Susie flushed. "I was saying that I think Evan is far too strict with little Ivor," she said.

"Someone has got to be sometime," said Cyril

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carelessly. "It will save the schoolmaster's arm later."

"But a baby! It is so cruel," she protested. "I must say, Cyril, to do you justice, you never interfered with the children."

"No, because they were girls," he replied. "And anyhow, I don't know anything about kids. I don't mind them but I keep out of the way."

"They were much fonder of you than Ivor is of his father."

"Don't let's be boastful. And you had much better leave those two to manage their own affairs."

Teresa came back at the end of the week and saw David once before he went away. The Prices were to move into Aldwych next month and Lady Varens was going abroad when David went to the Argentine to learn farming.

He met Teresa when he was leaving the University one evening and walked back with her. When they reached the house she invited him in. "I know Mother is out," she said, "and Father probably is, too, but I want you to come in I have one more thing to say."

"What is it?" he asked when they were in the drawing-room.

"Do you think you will certainly come back when the Prices' three years are up?"

"I shall see what sort of a show they run there. If it is all right I might let them have it and I would buy some land somewhere else.'

"Where for instance?"

"Anywhere where they talk English."

"Even in the Colonies? And what about all the things in your house?"

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"I should move them."

"And what about the old people on the place?"

"Easily move them too, if they liked. If not, leave them."

"Would many of them want to go, do you think?"

"Not unless your friend Fisk gets too much of the blood he is after. Then they might."

"David, I do loathe that Fisk."

"Yes, so do I.——Teresa?"

"It is the Lady Bountiful I can't do," she said very sadly. "There is something in me that sticks and boggles at it as if I were trying to swallow a fish bone. If you loved someone as much as you could and were told you must only flirt with them—wouldn't you feel you couldn't? It would be like selling one's soul to the devil."

"No, I do think that is awfully silly," said David. "You can't flirt with a girl you love. You get run away with and then—well, you go where it is going. You don't think about whether you ought to stop and pick mushrooms."

So it seemed. For when Susie came back David had gone, and Teresa's pale little face bore evidence of having paid dearly for her inability to (as she thought) flirt with her love for Mrs. Potter. It is impossible to say whether David carried his idea of the runaway horse any further, or comforted himself with the possibility of deflecting the course of Teresa's passion for regeneration.

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CHAPTER XIV

"I AM going to Aldwych to call on the Prices. Will you come with me, dear Dicky? I wish you would," said Susie.

Teresa said she would. Sometime the idea of Aldwych without David must be recognised and dealt with. She also wished her mother to forget that "a girl may regret some day" having refused a beautiful old place in the country and a really good husband "just for an idea." Poor little Teresa supposed that any show of reluctance to go back to the house might be taken as evidence of a weak spot in her armour. Neither she nor Evangeline had ever known how much of the world their mother detected from behind her veil of misty sweetness. Anything more candid than her words and actions could hardly be imagined, and yet somehow, as Evangeline had said, omelets were mysteriously made in hats, and whether Susie or the Powers of Darkness made them none of her audience could discern. Cyril had his ideas on the subject and we have seen how deeply they wounded her.

Mrs. Price was found in the garden, talking in her best manner to one of "the county" who had called; a crushing sort of woman who made it quite clear to Mrs. Price that she had called in obedience to the tradition that "noblesse oblige." She was known as Mrs. Archie Lake, and newcomers

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were supposed to be "all right" if she called on them. She had conferred the stamp of recognition on Mrs. Price for several reasons. First, "out of decency to Milly Varens"; secondly, because the Hunt was not in a very flourishing condition, and Mr. Price was reported to be rich and ambitious; thirdly, "just to see what they were like." Someone had met Joseph Price and reported that he was quite possible and that the girls would probably have money too in the end——. Here Mrs. Lake let her train of thought lose itself because one does not think these things out in so many words. Her son was rather a worry to her, but it is impossible to make plans of that sort. The French do, but we don't. Anyhow she called, and Susie and Teresa found her there. Mrs. Price was getting on well with her new manner. "How charming of you to come, Mrs. Fulton. Of course you know this part of the world well. And how is the General?" She did not wish Mrs. Lake to suppose that Millport was going to be allowed to track her down here, but Susie, of course, was different. She welcomed her.

"Yes, I think we have met somewhere, haven't we?" said Mrs. Lake, raising her eyes sleepily to Susie. Mrs. Price made a mental note and tried to look a little sleepy too.

"I am sure you are enjoying the country," Susie said to her. "Everything is looking so exquisite just now. We want to go away ourselves as soon as we can, but my husband finds it very difficult to get away. He doesn't care for the sea and so many of his Staff have children that he likes to let them off when the schools break up and take his own holiday when the hunting begins."

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"But isn't Millport on the sea somewhere?" asked Mrs. Lake. Mrs. Price flushed. "We hardly think of a great port like that as the seaside," she said. "Of course when my husband's ancestor went there first and practically built what there was it was on the sea, but that is so long ago and everything is so altered he would hardly recognise it if he were alive. There are very few people nowadays who have the courage of those pioneers who went down to the sea in ships and opened up communications with the East. My husband cares so much more for sport and racing and all that, that I tell him he is not half proud enough of the old family he comes from. Something so rugged and adventurous about the sea, isn't there?"

"They used to import slaves, didn't they?" Mrs. Lake inquired, looking quite vacant. "I wish they would begin again now. I am fed up with the search for servants, aren't you?"

"Oh, but don't you think that was terribly wrong?" said Susie. "I can't bear to think of it. I am sure that most of the labour troubles now are largely owing to people having been so inconsiderate for others in the past. Teresa and I both work a great deal in that way, and we see so much of it."

"Oh, really? What sort of work do you do?" asked Mrs. Lake of Teresa.

"I just sort papers in an office," said Teresa, who would have beaten her mother at that moment.

"Really? Don't you find you need exercise?" said Mrs. Lake. "You had better come and do some hunting in the winter. I have come to the conclusion that the working classes don't need helping any more; they help themselves to every-

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thing they want. Do your girls hunt ? " she turned to Mrs. Price.

" Oh, they are quite mad about it," their mother replied. " Sir David sold his horses before we came. He said he didn't understand that Mr. Price would have bought any that were good enough for the girls, but some others have been ordered, I believe, and in the meantime we have the three motors to get about in, so we are not really cut off."

Mrs. Lake was startled almost out of her good behaviour. She regretted for a moment having called so soon, in case it should really be impossible to go on with these people, however rich they were.

" I suppose Sir David is coming back in a year or two ? " she said, anxiously.

" Well, that of course, one can't say," Mrs. Price replied, " but my husband would have bought the place if he could and he still hopes to—if we find we can afford it, that is," she added, recollecting certain warnings from her daughters. " We had to draw in our horns very much since the war, like everybody else."

" Not quite everybody, do you think ? " said Mrs. Lake, as she made room for the butler and footman who had come in with tea. " There are some people who have taken a place called Fable near here—perhaps you know them ? I think they come from Millport or Poolchester, I forget which. He contracted for something during the war, boots or cholera belts or cigarettes or something, and not only that, but the price of whatever it was is still up. It is rather sad to see the old places go, one by one."

" I expect they come from Poolchester," said Mrs.

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Price. "There is a great deal of that sort of thing there. It is a manufacturing town of course."

"But such an interesting place," Susie intervened. "So much life. I went there once to hear some wonderful music, and the faces all looked to me so strong. No, no sugar, thanks,—Teresa, dear, will you take that cup from Mrs. Price?"

Joseph came in just then and Mrs. Lake dropped all unpleasant subjects immediately. She encouraged him and he responded gladly. He infused a quality of ease into the conversation.

"And how's the—what d'you call it?—the welfare of the city, Miss Fulton?" he asked presently. "Still going strong, what? Fisk been shedding much blood lately?"

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Lake curiously.

"Oh, great sport, isn't he, Miss Fulton? Communist, what? Miss Fulton b'nevolently hands round soup and Fisk gets into it, isn't that it? No, kait sairysly though. I hope you're getting on. I do immensely admire what you're doing. I couldn't do it for m'life. The smell of the f'llers on parade used to quite upset me."

Mrs. Lake didn't like that. "He must learn not to say those kind of things," she thought. "It is dreadfully bad form; but he is a nice boy in many ways; we had better make use of him."

To Teresa the whole thing was little less than torture. Love of humanity was so alive in her that to have it wounded in sport gave her something of the hopeless misery of a child roughly handled by bigger boys. The fact that they were of her own species made her sense of isolation worse. Affectionate women fear alien sympathies more than

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force. They also feel it their duty to betray the whereabouts of the thing they love by fighting over it, instead of merely putting it out of range of attack and guarding all approaches as men do.

"You would have smelt just as bad yourself if you had been a private," she said, blushing and stammering, "it is only just chance that gives you hot baths."

"Ha! ha!" he laughed heartily. "Of course I should. You're abs'lutely right; but then I shouldn't have minded, don't you see? That's th' whole point."

"How do you know you wouldn't?" she flamed out. "How do you know they don't care? They do care. You know nothing about it. You have never talked to them."

"Teresa, dear," Susie remonstrated.

"No, no, please," said Joseph. "Come on, Miss Fulton, we must finish this. I'm enjoying it 'mmensely. I love people that speak out. I——"

"Oh, do leave it alone," said Teresa. "You don't understand a bit."

"Yes, I do," he persisted. "I'm 'normously int'rested in th' whole subject. I shall b' sure to have to canvass for my father at the next election and what you were saying is just th' sort of thing th' Labour people will put up, and I shall have t' find an answer. And there isn't any answer, you know, except that somebody's got t' have money—there isn't 'nough in th' country for everybody—and mining and all that takes generations of training. Somebody's got to do it, and somebody's got t' stay outside and watch them when they come up. Th' question is, Who? Fisk thinks he ought t' have a

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turn because he never has. I think I'm going to because I've got int' the habit of it. There's nothing in it as an argument, you see. The only way is t' sit tight. The thing's bound t' settle itself in time."

"And what is your father's view as a Member of Parliament?" asked Mrs. Lake, who was a good deal bewildered, a little shocked and a very little amused.

"Oh, I don't know," said Joseph, "he doesn't say, but I don't think he stands much nonsense from the f'llers down at the works. But he keeps friends with the Labour Party, I b'lieve on principle. The government offered him a baronetcy last year, but that sort of thing isn't done now, thank goodness. He said he'd be a fool t' take it, I remember, but I forget why."

"How can you pretend to be so silly, Joseph," his mother interrupted. "You know your father doesn't believe in rewards for public service of that sort. No one can ever say he has pushed himself forward."

"No, my dear mother, that's just what I said," he remarked. "It's such frightf'lly bad form t' have titles and all that sort of thing, now. The Tories stick to it on principle, of course, but they're frightf'lly crude in their ideas——" He was wandering on gaily as a matter of habit, relating as much as he could remember of what he heard at the houses he loved, when Mrs. Archie Lake rose.

"Don't talk too much about crude Conservatives while you are at Aldwych, Mr. Price," she said. "We don't study politics down here; we just have them, and we are not likely to change. You had

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better come and play tennis with us next week, and leave abstruse problems alone."

Evangeline had taken a small house by the sea for July and August. She intended to be there alone with Ivor and his nurse, except for such time as she could persuade Teresa to spend with her. Evan would come down for week ends, and perhaps a whole ten days at the end of the time. She was beginning to lose those sociable tastes that had made her so popular when she came to Drage. Her joy in living that had made her easily throw off the weight of other people's theories of conduct was giving way under continuous fatigue. Her war against Evan's prejudices had broken out again.

This reassembling of his forces and hers might have been prophesied without much risk from the beginning, but the prophet would have been called cynical and pessimistic by all those genial souls who believe that the best way to prevent war is to invite the hostile parties to a picnic. They fondly suppose that because the guns are left at home there will be no fighting. Even when they look round and discover that half the party are drawn up on one side of the tablecloth with all the teapots and the other half are massed with all the buns on the other,—even then they would consider it morbid to suspect them of harbouring old grudges. It may be remembered that before Evan asked Evangeline to marry him he had reviewed and finally dismissed the remnant of his doubts about the soundness of her character. His inner voices warned him, "She is not your ideal woman; she is lax and flippant and light-headed," but Nature laughed at and tormented

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him. No one knows how Nature does this work of uniting opposite temperaments, but she did it, and Evan's misgivings retired muttering.

By the time we are now speaking of they had gathered again in a strong force. Evangeline's gaiety and confidence and innocence with which she had routed them were now weakened by constant unexpected attacks. The anxiety of never knowing from what quarter disapproval would burst out and turn pleasure into pain made her nervous and depressed. As Ivor grew older the strain was more than doubled, for in every attack of Evan's that she could have dodged or parried for herself she was hampered by Ivor's little body, that would suffer equally from her blows at her husband and her husband's at her. She dared not hide away with him, because that would at once bring about the crisis she dreaded, and Evan would claim his right to take the boy away. There was nowhere she could hide him where he would not be found by the police and given back to his father. She sat sometimes on a gate among fields that overlooked the railway line, and watched with frightened eyes the trains rush by and wondered whether any of them went far enough without a stop to take her and the child out of Evan's reach. She thought longingly of other countries, stretches of hill and forest, new faces, new people; English-speaking they must be for Evangeline, but there are plenty of these everywhere, on the other side of the globe. She thought once what fun it would be to walk about in bright sunshine, knowing that Evan was asleep in darkness and fog just below the curve of the round world. Only there, on the other side, would she feel safe; he would never come

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slowly up like a fly over an orange (as she was taught at school when the hemispheres were explained) and look for her. No, she knew he would not. He would search over England, and possibly Europe, but if the police still failed in their clues he would go home at last and explain to Cyril, and retire into a blacker severity than ever with his giggly little sisters. Then she used to shake herself free from these dreams and return home tired and sad. She had looked forward eagerly to being by the sea with Teresa and Ivor, and when they were all there at last, some of her old confidence came back.

She said nothing to Teresa about the trouble in her mind, because it had increased beyond the stage of being an interesting puzzle and become grief that lies quieter untouched, except by the one who brought it and only could remove it. One great difference between Evangeline and her mother was that Susie counted differences of opinion with herself as a compliment to her higher understanding; they were treasures to be turned over and enjoyed in secret. To her daughter they were so many obstructions to love, and must be destroyed if possible; if persistently obstructive, she climbed over and fled from them.

Ivor had certainly managed to collect in himself all the elements of discord in his father's and mother's families. If he had inherited his mother's joyousness and been content with that, the two of them together might have weakened Evan's fears through lack of exercise, for his disapproval was not the natural bitterness that uses a creed as the organ of its appetite; it was his means of following the same

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desire as Evangeline followed, the desire to know how God works the universe. She felt that she knew how it was done and he thought he knew. But feeling is generally stronger than thought in personal affairs, so if the wretched young Ivor had left well alone and not excited his father's reasoning powers, they might have grown soft like the Roman Legions. But unfortunately he had inherited a great deal of Susie's mischievous tendency to stir up strife without taking part in it. He had her elusive charm and was, like her, uncommunicative; he loved natural pleasure and was indifferent to public opinion, like his mother, and was as unswerving along his own chosen path as his father. This combination of qualities made him perfectly adapted as a bone of contention, a desirable young person, belonging to both, and yet to neither of the contending parties. There, down by the sea with his devoted mother and aunt and nurse, he played and bathed and went his own way in peace, asking nothing that was unreasonable, kind-hearted, courageous and merry; the kind of child that terrifies its weaker relatives by the thought of what it has to meet in the future; of candid eyes coming upon hatred for the first time, small hands roughened by work and stained with blood from the noses of hostile neighbours with predatory instincts and a perverted sense of humour; visions perhaps, of little trousers that were designed for warmth and comfort removed with trembling fingers at the command of an ogre with a cane in a place far from home—a callous creature with lips dripping the literature of a civilisation that worshipped suffering. There is a radical difference between mothers who revere the name of

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Cæsar and mothers who don't. It is not all children who work upon maternal terrors in this way, but Ivor had the gift to perfection and his unconsciousness of his own power made it the stronger.

The little party were playing on the sands one day, when two figures, one in a linen dress with a red parasol, the other in baggy tweeds, came to the edge of the cliff above them and sat down. Evangeline heard a small laugh with a familiar tone in it, and looked up. "Hullo, Dicky," she said, "there are the Vachells; look!" Mrs. Vachell waved her hand and then said something, and presently both figures rose and came slowly down the sand-hills, Mrs. Vachell with leisurely ease, her husband with the reluctance of a shy man obeying the stronger will of a wife used to society.

"I had no idea you were here," she said. "Did I tell you of the place by any chance? There are so few people here generally. You know my husband, don't you?" Mr. Vachell bowed. "But you two don't count as people," she added. "I don't grudge you your simple pleasures. If you spend your days like this making sand pies you must have very peaceful minds. What I hate are people who put up tents and are always making tea and screaming in two inches of water."

"Your boy seems to be having a good time," said Mr. Vachell. Ivor was busy with a net among the small rocks that appeared at low tide.

"Yes, he loves it," Evangeline replied. "We are so happy here." She spread her rug hospitably, and they all sat down. Mr. Vachell and Teresa were side by side in a silence that each felt the other

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ought to break first, but neither was equal to the attempt.

"Is Captain Hatton with you?" asked Mrs. Vachell.

"No, not often," Evangeline replied. "He comes for week ends sometimes.

"Your boy looks very well," Mr. Vachell remarked.

"Yes, he is, and he is really no trouble," said his mother. "There are some other children about, but he doesn't seem to want them. He is the most independent creature I ever met."

"That is a useful thing in a boy, isn't it?"

"It is useful in anybody," said Evangeline, sighing. "I think if everybone minded their own business like animals, and were just happy eating together and enjoying each other's society and hopping off in between, it would be much nicer."

Mr. Vachell's face wrinkled into a smile, but he said nothing.

Teresa happened to look up. "What are you laughing at?" she asked.

"Your sister's idea of living agrees with mine," he said. They missed Mrs. Vachell's reply, but Evangeline went on thinking aloud, incited by the sunshine and the splash of the waves. She had once said to Susie, as a child, that the sea was always telling her to speak out, but that it never said anything but "h'm" when she did, and Susie had answered, "Yes, dear, that is quite true." She had found the sea restful herself, when pursued by the eager questioning of lovers. Evangeline went on now, "There is too much busy-bodying about morals. I think that people who like committing

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murder should be put on an island together and settle it among themselves; people who steal should have all their things taken away and sold for hospitals; people who say nasty things should be given vinegar tea made with bilge water, and be photographed every day and obliged to look at the proofs——"

"What about people who are stupid?" asked Mrs. Vachell.

"Oh, poor darlings, nothing about them," said Evangeline quickly, "don't be horrid."

"Don't you think most vice is stupidity?"

"No, certainly not. For instance, I am so stupid that I don't know what two and two make, but I don't mean an atom of harm."

"But you may do a lot of harm by adding them up to make six. Why not try to learn?"

"I don't believe God adds up," said Evangeline, tracing patterns in the sand with her finger. "But then I expect He knows the answer without thinking, so that doesn't come to anything."

"I don't know your husband, Mrs. Hatton," said Mr. Vachell, "but I hope he is not passionately fond of arithmetic."

"He has a passion for everything uncomfortable," said Evangeline.

"Poor fellow!" observed Mr. Vachell.

"Mr. Vachell, really I don't think you need look like that," said Teresa. "Your study, which I saw once, is the most hauntingly uncomfortable place I was ever led into. I couldn't go to sleep the night after I had seen it."

"Why, what is the matter with it?" he asked, surprised.

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"Everything is so dug up," she explained. "Have you ever seen it, Chips?" she turned to her sister. "I do think when people have finished with their lives they might be allowed to get rid of them decently. To have their bones and their tears and the things they have been happy with all brought back and looked at——. Suppose someone dug up Millport thousands of years after us, and put a whole street full of people together again! Personal possessions are bad enough when the people who own them are alive; they are so full of—I don't know what—associations. But when the owners are dead their things become perfectly horrid. I don't think anyone ought to own anything at all. I would like them to live out of doors in tents that don't cost anything, and to eat with their fingers——"

"I am very sorry my things worried you so much," said Mr. Vachell. "I have always looked at them quite prosaically as history; interesting in their way. In fact, I think I could show you that they are interesting if you came and looked at them again. Some of them are very beautiful, and if people make beautiful things to please themselves they are worth keeping. The world would be very squalid by now if it had gone on as you suggest. Think of the grass all trampled down with being sat upon and nobody's hair ever having been combed, and how dreadfully they would all quarrel and gossip with nothing to do."

"I expect I was thinking of a world with fewer people in it," said Teresa. "It makes me giddy when I think of arranging a government that will be fair to millions and millions of people, each one

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of them just a little different from any one of the others."

"That is where historians do their humble best for you," said he. "It does sort the masses into a few main heaps that tend to move about in definite directions, and even clear the ground by destroying one another."

"Yes, that is a man's only idea of deciding an argument," said his wife. "He has never been able to understand anything more intelligent than blood. And as long as women are silly enough to go on providing children and handing them over to him the supply will be kept up and arguments will be decided in that way."

"I am afraid I must go in and do a little work," said he, rising with a sigh.

"Good-bye," said his wife, "I'll come along later."

They sat talking until it was time to go in to tea. Evangeline began to feel her contentment in the outdoor life she loved give way gradually before the force of purpose that Mrs. Vachell brought with her. The Sphinx who looked so calm among hungry crowds had the opposite effect on Evangeline's simple enjoyment of things as they are. The smothered rebellion that is hidden by pride so long as the enemy is overpowering may suddenly break out and inflame a peaceful party of shepherds and set them running and shouting for an end that they never contemplated or desired. Evangeline had been suffering under a sense of heavy depression when she came away to the sea. She felt herself up against an obstacle that was not to be moved because it moved with her and encircled her from

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all sides, closing her in and shutting out all the new joys of the future that she had seen ahead of her when Ivor was born. Every step she took was hampered by fear that she might be sending him farther away from her, some incident might arise that would strengthen Evan's conviction that she was not fit to have the charge of him. Then when she hid her sympathy from Ivor and forced herself to suffer for the sake of keeping him with her, she could see a look of childish judgment in his eyes that placed her unjustly in the category she dreaded, that of people who have grown up and are beyond the pale of confidence from the young. If she went on pretending for his sake, she said to herself, he would become like Romulus and Remus, living in his own thoughts without a mother. The idea made her almost mad at times.

Alone with Teresa and Ivor by the sea, she had got back her confidence, her nature being of the kind that expects a trouble left behind to remain where it is without attempting pursuit. She kept no record of the occasions when this hope had been disappointed. The things Mrs. Vachell talked of that afternoon showed her something entirely new to her. She understood, to her great surprise, that all over the world were thousands of other Evangelines, suffering as she did, from the inexplicable harshness of men towards those precious, irrational gambollings of the mind, that move women to actions that are condemned as "unreasonable," "inconsistent," "illogical," "false," "silly," and generally lacking in orderly sequence. She learned that she was not alone, fighting something sinister that had no shape and perhaps was only a disorder

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of her own imagination. Mrs. Vachell explained that the enemy was terribly real and powerful; the enemy of all true women whose duty it was to unite in fighting to the last drop of their blood.

"Women are not stupid," she said in her slow, deep voice, "they are not irrational. What you see in Ivor and dread to lose—what your husband does not see—is what comes into the world by women, and your husband thinks it foolish because it is not in him. He wants to preserve his own qualities; you want to preserve yours; they are wholly contradictory, and one side or the other must impose its will."

"But I thought men were supposed to adore women for having just what they haven't got, just as we adore them for their physical strength and their brains."

"So they say, and so we say, because otherwise there would be no marriages," said Mrs. Vachell. "But it is a lie. We only love their strength for the sake of getting the better of it. They cultivate our foolishness because it gives them rest from competition, and they can sit down and plume themselves. Each wants the power, and the centuries of suffering that we have gone through have taught us to see love as the only thing worth having, while they still look on it as a pleasant fad to be indulged in when they have finished arranging who is to get the most of what belongs, by right, equally to all. It is all very pretty, you will find, if you look into it."

. . . . .

"Dicky," said Evangeline, a few days later, when she and Teresa had settled themselves under the

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cliff after breakfast, "I have done the most evil bit of mischief. I feel like Guy Fawkes. I have advised Mrs. Trotter to come here, and she is coming."

"But why not?" Teresa asked in surprise.

"Don't you know how Evan hates her? No, I suppose you wouldn't. But he does. She is his *bête noir*."

"But, then, why have you asked her?"

"I didn't ask her. Mother wrote and said the rooms the Trotters generally go to at Broadstairs have got something the matter with them; a lodger developed some disease or other, I think. They couldn't get in anywhere, and she wanted to know if I could get rooms here. There are rooms in those cottages down on the left by the church, nurse told me. So I think she is sure to come."

"But that isn't your fault," said Teresa. "You couldn't do anything else. Evan hasn't bought up the whole place."

"No, not if I had done it innocently like that," said Evangeline, "but I didn't. I urged her to come and made everything easy, and I have been enjoying the idea ever since. It is deliberate vice. There is Evan coming along now with Mrs. Vachell, of course. He still thinks her a very ladylike woman. Oh, Dicky! when Mrs. Trotter comes won't she mow them both down with repartee? It will be lovely."

"Chips," said Teresa hesitatingly, "you—you're not so—so kind to Evan as you are to the rest of us. You used to be so interested in making him talk, and now you so often won't listen when he does."

"He talks such rot," said her sister. "I can't

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be bothered with it." There was silence for some minutes.

"I'm a pig, Dicky," said Evangeline presently. "But if you knew how deadly it is being with someone who doesn't understand the way women look at things——"

"Don't talk about women as if they were all alike," said Teresa impatiently. "It is as bad as Mrs. Carpenter. She is always saying, 'we women are so something or other,' and Mother says, "but then, don't you think women are so 'something else.' But they both give you an idea of somebody very noble and forlorn in the position of Daniel in the den of lions. I am sure that there are certain qualities in people, courage and truthfulness and meanness and greed and all the rest, and everybody has some of them in different mixtures; it doesn't make any difference whether they are male or female or rich or poor. It is so silly trying to label people into classes and species according to their incomes or their sex. Nationality divides them up a little, I admit, but otherwise you are just asking for trouble by presupposing any vice or virtues."

"Well, then, men should stop presupposing that women have no brains and no morals," said Evangeline.

"I don't believe that any woman with either has ever bothered what was presupposed about her, or had any difficulty in convincing anyone to whom it mattered," Teresa replied.

"But that is nonsense, Dicky. You know it was only when women had to be employed in the war that they had a chance to show what they

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could do. Look at women doctors before they began to run their own hospitals."

"Well, that is exactly what I have been trying to explain. It all came of that abominable system of classifying. Women were this and women were that, and it was very largely their own fault. Which sex was it that used to say, 'My dear, that is unladylike. Don't imitate that nasty bold girl who handles mice as if she were a navvy'? Now they are allowed to be competent or incompetent, as nature made them, and you are doing your best to rebuild the whole obstacle by saying, 'All women are not what you think them. They are all something else. They have all got lovely, pure, high-browed minds and all men have horrid brutish ones.' You are only changing a guerilla war into a series of pitched battles. I detest Mrs. Vachell. She looks like a martyr, and she is only a hunger striker."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean she is a rebel with no sense of adventure. She will plot against any sort of power that galls her personally, and I don't think she uses fair means; there's no gallantry about her. It is all spitting and kicking and causing harmless people inconvenience."

"I think you are most unfair," said Evangeline hotly. "She is out against all sorts of tyranny, the sort of tyranny that Evan would exercise over Ivor if he could; the tyranny of horrid vulgar people who never do a stroke of work and have no brains and simply live on enormous incomes, while women are sweated and slave-driven or forced on to the street. It has nothing to do with her personally; Mr. Vachell is the least interfering

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man in the world, and they are not particularly hard up."

"Whom does she think she is going to do good to by making you fed up with Evan?"

"She doesn't; but she has made me see why it is that he doesn't understand children and why I have to stand up to him if I want to save Ivor. And you know, Dicky, it is such a joke, because Evan thinks her perfect and is always holding her up as a model of dignity and common sense. That is why I want Mrs. Trotter to come. It does make me so irritated to see him stalking along thinking Mrs. Vachell is listening with the deepest interest to what he says, and all the time she is boiling like a volcano, and when she looks quietest I know she is quite white hot with contempt for something he has said."

"Then she is an abominable hypocrite," said Teresa indignantly.

"I know," her sister answered rather sadly, "and if I tell Evan the least little bit of truth about her he flies at me and won't listen; just thunders me down, and yet I am really fond of him. But she hates him, and the only way she can get in the truths she wants to say is to keep so quiet that he doesn't understand, and then little by little she undermines his ideas. It is quite wonderful to watch."

When Mrs. Trotter came she surpassed even Evangeline's expectations. It may be necessary to recall to the reader's mind that on the occasion when Evan had burst out at Cyril's dinner-table on the subject of women throwing dirt at each other the exciting cause of his anger had been Mrs.

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Trotter's sarcasm on the wife of the Staff Captain, who wanted to "get into the University set," and was alleged to have incensed her husband by too frequent references to Mr. Vachell's brain power. Mrs. Trotter was devoted with real sisterly affection to the Staff Captain, who was an honest blue-eyed Briton, and she therefore harboured secret dislike, both of the University set and of Evan with his misplaced belief in Mrs. Vachell. The Hattons could not do other than ask her to dinner on the evening when she arrived at her lodgings, alone with the child and its nurse, as Captain Trotter was yachting with a friend. Evangeline had mischievously urged the Vachells to come in after the meal as they often did. When they arrived Evan was in one of his most taciturn moods, having been worried by his wife's daring laughter over some misdemeanour of Ivor's. She was comparing notes with Mrs. Trotter, whose young daughter treated her parents with fearless impertinence, the common result of insensitiveness in favourable surroundings.

"The little scamp!" Mrs. Trotter exclaimed. "He and Maisie will be great pals I expect. She doesn't care a rap for anybody. Her father can't say boo to a goose when she is knocking round. I tell him he had better give it up and save time."

Evan glanced at Mrs. Vachell and saw her raise her eyebrows slightly. It soothed him to be assured that she shared his disgust and he sat down by her. "I am very sorry," he said in a low voice. "We ought to have warned you."

"Oh no, please," she answered. "It is very interesting; and I am sure Evangeline enjoys it.

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And it is something you have got to learn some time. You may have daughters of your own in days to come, and then you will know how to save yourself needless worry by giving in at once."

"Yes, it is appalling, isn't it?" he agreed, supposing her to be commenting on Mrs. Trotter's remark. "But perhaps it is good in some ways to let the thing go on as grossly and blatantly as possible. It will achieve its own destruction all the quicker."

"How?" she asked.

"A revulsion is bound to come, and it will be all the stronger when women see what a monstrous race they have raised. They have rebelled against chastisement with whips and their children will chastise them with scorpions."

"They will, indeed," said Mrs. Vachell. "I am glad I have no children, though the want of them put out the sun for me so far as marriage is concerned. But it is not a world to have children in just now."

"If you had brought them up to be like yourself they would have helped to keep the balance," said Evan.

"Well, you shall send your daughters to me to bring up," she said, turning her small sphinx face directly to him. "Evangeline will be engrossed in her boys. She thinks women of no importance."

"It is not that," said Evan, "but she thinks nothing of importance except liveliness and getting the pleasure out of everything that happens, and throwing away the rest. As soon as anything has to be bought at the price of discomfort it is worthless to her."

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"Do you think so?" said she, raising her eyebrows again. "Is your beautiful Ivor worth so little to her? You surprise me. I thought she was devoted to him."

"So she is, but she won't give herself the momentary pain of correcting him. It is the most fatal cowardice. I don't know what to do to avert the end that I foresee."

"You must have been a great deal with children," she remarked, while she looked at him with grave inquiry. "Did you always care for them, or is it just that you understand them so well?"

"Every man knows the kind of way a boy ought to be brought up," he replied innocently.

"And a woman, of course, understands a girl better?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"It is so much simpler that they should start on wholly different lines from the beginning."

"Well, I suppose they do naturally. I know that my sisters never had the least idea what I was driving at. They were always giggling among themselves."

"And your mother?" asked Mrs. Vachell.

"My mother was a wonderful woman," Evan replied. His tone made it clear that discussion was barricaded along that road.

"I don't want to persuade you to discuss her, but please answer one question truthfully. Suppose you had done something that you knew she would dislike, not because it was wrong in itself, but because she had no experience of a wish to do it herself; let us take for an instance that delightful

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story I heard about your taking a German's watch to pieces and what you did with it."

"Who told you that story?" he asked, frowning.

"The Staff Captain's wife told my husband. It amused him and it amused her, because she has had parents who educated her between them; they didn't believe in female sheep and male goats."

"I find all that sort of telling of stories very offensive," said Evan. "But if they choose to hear it it is nothing to me. There is no harm in it."

"But your mother would have held a different opinion if she had known?"

"Why are you asking these questions, Mrs. Vachell?" She saw disappointment in his face, and knew she must pick her way delicately.

"Because you were good enough to give me some of your confidence in a difficulty and I was trying to make you understand what I think is a point of great importance to you and Evangeline and Ivor. What I say is that you were not perfectly brought up as you think, because you grew up with the idea that what was all right for you as a man would offend your mother as a woman, even to hear about. That means that all through your life you could only enjoy her society within limits, and you were either obliged to worry out every difficulty alone in your head, or else to chance it among outsiders who had not a quarter of the interest in you that she had. You must have felt very lonely, or you wouldn't have shown me so much confidence as you have. Have you ever tried Evangeline as a confidante? She has not been brought up with many

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prejudices—not enough you think. And one thing more. Don't you think that Ivor is better off than you were at his age? I am sure he is less harassed with problems and he will have a better brain than his father, because it won't have been prematurely worn out."

"It is no use telling me he won't go to bits if he has no principles to fall back on," said Evan doggedly.

"But what about Evangeline's principles?" Mrs. Vachell persisted.

"She has none. That is the whole point. It is where we started from——"

"You two are carrying on a very long flirtation," interrupted Mrs. Trotter from the other side of the room. "Can't we hear what it is all about? I heard something about principles just now. Do you believe in principles, Captain Hatton?"

"Yes," said Evan. "I hope you are pleased with the lodgings my wife found for you."

"Yes, thank you, they are delightful. But talking of principles, do you know, Mrs. Vachell, that your friend Fisk has been making the most dreadful havoc with his principles? You see we never get rid of these students like the ordinary undergraduates are disposed of, because they don't go down for the vacs. They are at home all the time. And he has been spending his spare time in stirring up the Welsh and the Irish and every sort of rabble in the place, and holding meetings and passing resolutions. He gets hold of the wives and tells them they ought to be dressed in velvet and silk, and have time to read and play the piano. But Mrs. Price says all that is quite inconsistent

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with Communism. The real Communists want everyone to live as simply as possible and earn a small amount each day and then improve their minds. But since Mr. Fisk spent those few days with the Prices he has lost all his noble ideas about garden cities and honest toil and sandals or whatever he believed in, and in place of the blood that was to be spilled in the cause of education and leisure and concerts and so on he now wants rapine, and oh! the most frightful outrages! so that everyone may change places. He and his friends are to have education and champagne and talk big, while their female relations play the gramophone and order Mrs. Price about. It is all screamingly funny. Dear me, Captain Hatton, pray don't look at me like that. Do you think one ought not to laugh at poor silly creatures? I do find human nature so very amusing sometimes. What do you think, Professor Vachell? Do you think the universities are doing good or harm?"

"They have hardly reached an age of full-grown responsibility yet," he replied. "When ladies and Labour have joined our deliberations for a few years we shall be able to give a better opinion."

"Now, don't be sarcastic," Mrs. Trotter warned him with a finger. "That is very naughty of you. I hope it will be a long time before your beautiful cloistered calm is invaded in any such way. I can't imagine women and tradesmen holding forth in Oxford, can you, Mrs. Vachell?"

"So long as the present generation of poor weak fools, who will risk nothing, survive it is rather difficult," she answered quietly. Evan started slightly as she spoke. "But even though every

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year the percentage is less of boys who are brought up to be bullies and of girls whose intelligence is crushed, it will take a long time to destroy the tradition. Don't worry, Mrs. Trotter. Your system will probably last your time, and if your little girl does scandalise you by learning some other trade than husband hunting, she may make up by marrying a tradesman Prime Minister."

"I don't think that is at all likely," Teresa broke in. "The tradesman Prime Minister would want a perfect lady for his wife; they always do. They boast of the work that their women do when they want to compare them with what they call the idle rich; but the very first thing they want to buy for their wives and daughters is exemption from any kind of work."

"Nonsense, my dear Teresa," said Mrs. Vachell. "They are the keenest of all that their daughters should have 'the schooling.'"

"Yes, but that is only so that they may not have to do housework or be ordered about in shops. They think that education for a girl means her marrying into another class and keeping a servant. They are just like us. They hate squalor and want to live like we do. They don't care for learning in itself any more than we do——"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Fulton," Mr. Vachell interrupted. "Do I understand that you put down my laborious work of research to a sordid hope of fitting myself to dine at Buckingham Palace, or even living there some day? You are wounding me very much."

"No, of course not," said Teresa. "You are quite different; you are a man. I am sure lots of

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men wanted to learn because they are interested. I was thinking of what they wanted for their daughters."

"Well, what do you think the Principal wants for our excellent Emma?" he went on. "That she should marry the Prince of Wales? I don't believe she has got the ghost of a chance, so you had better stop her while you can."

"Don't muddle up what I say like that," said Teresa. "Emma only wants to stop mothers giving their babies rhubarb pie, and to persuade fathers to buy bread instead of beer; and she wants them to be clean and have time and money enough to find out what they can do."

"But where does Maisie Trotter's husband come in?" asked Evan, who was also grateful for the diversion that Teresa had made.

"I haven't the least idea. I have lost sight of him. Oh, no, I remember; he was to be Prime Minister. It will be no good for Maisie to live up to him in the way of education, because his sisters will do that. He will want a pink and white princess who can detect a crumpled rose leaf under the mattress. I assure you that is what working people ask for. It is the really valuable thing that they have lost, and they are often so silly, poor darlings, and think it comes with money. You know how fussy people like the Prices are about breeding, and they spend and spend, trying to buy it somehow and knowing that they fail. It is so sad."

"Oh, everything is sad if you notice it," said Mrs. Trotter impatiently. "I don't believe in pitying people for not being different from what they are. I once met a woman who said she

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disliked travelling in public conveyances because women's hats were pathetic; something about the trimming; if you ever heard such nonsense! Now I'm off and thank you all very much for a pleasant evening. Anyone coming my way?"

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CHAPTER XV

"WELL, I am sure, Roderick," said Mrs. Carpenter as she turned the last page of a letter she was reading, "Evangeline Hatton seems to be laying up a nice future for herself. Emmie Trotter is staying down there with Maisie and she says that Mrs. Vachell is in and out of the Hattons' house the whole time, influencing Evangeline to run down her husband. And that poor Evan Hatton is as blind as a bat and running after Mrs. Vachell all the time. Of course, Amy Vachell is one of those hard women who never see when men are attracted by them. All she thinks of is her social work and I have often told her it is dangerous and that in her anxiety to put women on a higher footing she forgets that men persist in remaining on the lower one and they misunderstand her motives. I knew she would get into trouble some day." There was a note of triumph in her voice.

"Yers," her husband answered deprecatingly over the top of his pince-nez. "Yers—yers—very foolish of her."

"They will come to grief in the end, you will see," said Mrs. Carpenter, as one who observes the first swallow of the season.

She met Mrs. Eric Manley that afternoon at a sale of work on behalf of an inebriates' home in Mrs. Abel's parish. They wandered together from

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stall to stall, inspecting photograph frames ornamented with landscapes in poker work, table centres and tea-cosies of hand-painted satin, pinafores edged with cheap lace, preposterous woollen garments for all ages, dreary confections in flannelette that would make a Hottentot pessimistic, dusters, packets of Lux and grate polish; everything that could most vividly recall the horrors of the Will to Live and the Desire to Decorate at Random. The two friends sat down presently to tea in a small room festooned with coloured muslin, served by ladies who were beginning to feel the running about rather a strain though great fun.

"Well, my dear, how is it that you are still here?" asked Mrs. Carpenter. "I told Mrs. Abel that it was a bad time to have the sale as everybody would be away, but she said that some of the best helpers would have more time now. Of course, we shall get off to Scotland later. I heard to-day that Evangeline Hatton and her husband are not enjoying their holiday very much, poor things. They are at Roscombe with the boy and Teresa Fulton, and the Vachells are there too. I am afraid Amy Vachell is stirring up mischief. It is a great pity for such young married things."

"Oh, who told you?" asked Mrs. Manley.

"Emmie Trotter for one. She is quite worried about it. Captain Hatton is so dogged, you know, with that kind of foolish religious fervour. It does blind people so when it takes hold of them; they don't seem to see anything else. Of course he is a splendid man; so upright and devoted to her. But I do think it is a great mistake to get carried away by that kind of thing."

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"And what is Mrs. Vachell after, do you suppose?" inquired her friend.

"Oh, dear Amy! I am sure I don't know. Of course one knows that she is absolutely straight; no one could doubt that. But it is a pity, I think, the things she does sometimes—with that far-away look of hers, don't you know? She may have encouraged Evangeline without meaning anything, and made her rebel against his very dogmatic manner. And the Professor is so silly; he really is. All that about Mrs. Harting was so absurd. She is a very intellectual woman; I get on with her splendidly, we have so much in common; and she threw herself into all his excavations and so on, and of course dear Amy was just a little—well, she didn't like it; naturally she wouldn't; but there was absolutely no more in it than that. However, it may have made Amy bitter and perhaps she has lashed out against men and put Evangeline up to some nonsense. I wonder if I could do any good by having a chat with her mother."

"I should leave it alone, I think," Mrs. Manley advised. "You won't get anything out of Mrs. Fulton. She is so extraordinarily broad-minded and indulgent and thinks everybody means well."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Carpenter, with her head on one side. "I don't know altogether that I should have said that. Dear Susie Fulton is very shrewd and likes to keep the peace in the family, but she would very much dislike the General getting to hear anything from outside sources, and it might be best to warn her privately. What do you think?"

"Well, you might drop in," said Mrs. Manley.

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"I could drive you round there if you have bought all you want now. Perhaps I had better not come in. You would prefer to talk about it alone."

"Perhaps that would be wise," Mrs. Carpenter agreed. "I really think it is the kind thing to do. It would be such a pity if anything got round."

She found Susie at home and tea being cleared away. "I have had some, my dear, thank you," said Mrs. Carpenter. "Quite an excellent tea at dear Jenny Abel's little sale, where I was buying for all I was worth. Such a poor lot of things. I am afraid they won't have done very well; but then they don't manage that place at all as it should be done. They ought to call a meeting and have the whole thing laid out and make a proper appeal. It is no good patching up with little affairs like that. No one wants to buy at all nowadays; we are all overdone with sales of work. Still, the things won't be wasted. I just pass them on to the next. Your little Teresa is not back again with you yet, I suppose?"

"No, she is still with Evangeline," said Susie. "They are staying on as long as the weather lasts. The Vachells and the Trotters are there, too, so they are quite a pleasant little party."

They talked nicely in this way for some time and then Mrs. Carpenter said, lowering her voice mysteriously, "You didn't gather, did you, that there was any little difficulty with Evangeline seeing so much of dear Amy Vachell? I am not quite sure that she is just the person whom I should choose to be very much with a young mother, who, of course, wants to see everything *couleur de rose*."

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"Dear me, no," Susie replied in gentle astonishment. "Is there any difficulty about anything? I didn't know. What makes you think so?"

"My dear, it was just an impression that was whispered to me by a little bird who knows them very well. I won't tell you whom because it wouldn't be fair, and of course there was nothing wrong anywhere, but just the idea that Evangeline and her hubby were inclined to drift a little in opposite directions and that Amy Vachell—who is so open-hearted and sincere and has such a high opinion of women and the place they should take in the home—may perhaps have unconsciously made a little mischief. Captain Hatton believes so very strongly in the dogmatic side of religion, doesn't he? and he may suppose that Amy goes further with him in her opinions than she does. But that is all; just to put you on your guard. It was the merest trifle that I heard, but it would be such a pity if it went any further when you as a mother could put it all right, probably, in a moment with just a word."

"Oh, I am sure there is nothing in it," said Susie contentedly. "People make too much of Evan's manner, and he means nothing; it is all on the surface. He is a most delightful fellow and Evangeline is wrapped up in him. But it was so kind of you to come and tell me. I often think people are not outspoken enough."

She said nothing about Mrs. Carpenter's visit until Teresa came home, and then she chose the next evening when Cyril was peacefully reading in an armchair. Teresa had put away a bundle of

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papers from Emma's office, over which she had been toiling with evident fatigue and depression.

"I hope dear little Ivor is not vexing his father as much as he did while he was a baby," Susie began quietly over her knitting.

"He doesn't get into many rows," said Teresa. "It would be almost better if he did."

"How do you mean, dear?"

"I mean that Evan says so little, it is rather frightening sometimes. He just looks and you don't know what he is thinking."

"Evangeline doesn't worry, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think she does. She is much thinner than she used to be."

"I daresay that is the damp of Drage," Susie remarked. "It is a very relaxing place, I have heard." Teresa laughed, not very merrily.

"Mother, darling," she asked, looking at Susie with kindly curiosity, "if Father bit you do you think you would say it was owing to the frost? I believe you would."

"What an absurd thing to say, dear. I don't talk so much about the weather, do I? It is a subject I have always detested; it is so commonplace. But if you are laughing because I said that Drage is damp that is ridiculous. Everyone knows it is and there is nothing so depressing as a place that is all on clay." She left the room presently and Cyril put down his book.

"How old are you, Dicky?" he asked.

"Twenty-five next month. Why?"

"You seem to have grown a little and I couldn't remember how long we had been here. It is a devil of a long time. Sit down there for a minute

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and tell me something I want to know. Aren't you wasting your time a bit, young woman? frousting down there with Emma Gainsborough. Or is it what you want?"

"I am rather in a fog," said Teresa. He said nothing and she went on, "I used to look at people paddling along in the mud, streaming past all the time; you remember the first time we went down to the docks together and came back on a tram? It fascinated me. I had always felt that there was something that my mind was chasing after, as if I were half asleep and shouldn't wake up until I had found out what I wanted to know. Have you ever felt like that?"

"No, I am not much troubled with what is called the Higher Mind," said Cyril. "But I don't disbelieve in it on that account. In fact I think it is a good thing if properly used. But go on. How does it work out?"

"Well, they all look so angry and miserable and discontented," she explained. "There was some mystery or other that cut me off from them like a misunderstanding; some enormous grievance or injustice that divided us and our lot from them and their lot, and I felt as if I wanted to break through it somehow—anyhow—and say, 'Here! Let me in! I won't be left outside. Tell me what you want and I will get it for you somehow.' I wanted to give them everything I had; not only money, but the kind of pleasure that makes it of no importance whether one has money or not. And then they let me in. Strickland let me in first. She told me such a lot when she found that I wasn't inquisitive or preaching. She explains things so

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clearly and I began to see what the grievance is and then it got more hopeless than ever, because I saw that before you can get into the frame of mind that is independent of poverty you must be decently fed and warm or else you can't think at all for sheer animal discomfort. I suppose mystics come back down the same road by smashing the body after they have used it to get a mind with. They couldn't begin as slum babies and say, 'I must fast and subdue the flesh.' You see, if you start hungry, unless you have a perfectly sweet nature you probably think of nothing but clawing for food and knocking down someone else who has got some. Then you find people down there with all sorts of wonderful qualities so strong that they manage to keep their end of the stick up in spite of everything. So that topples down all your hopes when you see that all the virtues that you were going to bring in by making more comfortable surroundings are there already in the most wonderful perfection. It just thickens the mystery and makes the barrier and the fog more unaccountable than it was from outside. If you could see the horrors that some people contend against and still remain as good as gold and gay as larks, I think you would stop being so perfectly disgusting as you are sometimes about my Potters and people."

"No, I shouldn't, my dear," he said, "but not because I don't believe you. But why should I make myself sick with smells that I can't prevent? I should be of no earthly use sitting by the bedside of an aged fish-wife with my nose in my handkerchief, and I don't understand accounts or babies. I am much more use at my own job, which neither

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Emma nor your friend Jason nor even the lion-hearted Fisk could do."

"No, no, you are much better where you are," she agreed. "And now you see I have got beyond the first fog into a worse one. I feel cut off from the side I left and I can do nothing for the others because they have got all the means of happiness that I wanted to give them. You see, if anything good survives there it gets awfully good because it takes so much exercise."

"Yes?" said Cyril.

"I don't know how much you were ever in love with anyone, but you wouldn't, would you, have married Mother if she had not been rather extra pretty and very, very well washed?"

"No, Dicky, you are not going to win on that. I should never have got within speaking distance of her, so the Higher Mind would not have contended with the lower. No war, no victory. You see, your Misters and Misseses of the unwashed brigade start on an equal footing. Mr. Potter has nothing to forgive before he inquires into the perfections of Mrs. Potter's character."

"Very well, we'll try again," she said patiently. "I must make you understand somehow. We'll take Mother. She was devoted to us and she loves babies as she only sees clean ones. Suppose she lived in a slum and had half-a-dozen of them squalling and screaming and covered with every sort of hideous filth and was kept awake all night and saw them being hungry and ill and cold. Just think what a tremendous sort of love she would need to have to make her go on with it; and how honest she would have to be not to steal for them;

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and how unselfish to go hungry so that they might have what food there was, and how patient not to grumble and scold. You need a super quality of every good point in a character in order to keep up at all. You can't say that being used to horrors takes away all the merit of enduring them with real style like you see sometimes down there.

"No, not all," said Cyril, "but then, Dicky, you must be fair. Lots of things that I find very hard to bear, such as—no, I won't go into them; you are too tender-hearted and I don't want to add to your worries. But I assure you I am a very noble fellow in my way though nothing I have to put up with would rouse any sympathy in your fog-bound heroes."

Teresa looked at him anxiously, critical and questioning.

"I am only trying to cheer you up, dear," he assured her. "I have a very tidy mind—untidiness at the office is one of the things that I was going to mention just now—and I dislike arguing in a circle. That is where Emma is more suited to her job than you are. She never stands about and says, 'Yes, but on the other hand——' or, 'what can we do, because every way you look at it it doesn't make sense?' She plugs along as busy as a bee, fitting splints on to one and a flannel petticoat and a book of poetry on to another and doesn't wear herself out in guessing whether the creatures are angels or devils. Dicky, my dear, you are twenty-five and you are missing everything that you have been looking for and that you haven't found. You have said that you only got past one

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fog into another and that you want to give what you have to starving people who need it. What about David ? "

" I do want so dreadfully to marry him," said Teresa after some hesitation. " But I am sure it is selfish. He won't do what I want and what would make it all right."

" What won't he do ? "

" Sell the place and give the money to the work Emma is doing. It wouldn't make much difference, I know, but it would take a few hundred children out of the mud and I should feel I had done my best."

" You would do much more good by keeping those damned Prices out of Aldwych. You never saw such a mess as they are making of it. It is perfectly beastly. Enough to make the old man turn in his grave."

" But it is the wrong way to live," she persisted. " I have no right to glide into beautiful things and comfort that I haven't earned."

" Well, look here. You're pretty comfortable to start with, aren't you ? Your mother and I saw to that. She especially. She married me because she wanted a child and like a good careful bird she chose the downiest nesting-place she could find for the benefit of her young."

" Oh, Father," said Teresa, awestruck. " Wasn't she in love with you ? "

" Not a bit of it," he replied.

" I wish she had married a poor man, then," said the girl. " It would have saved me a lot of trouble. But to go back to what you said I couldn't help being born where I am, but I can give

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back everything I have got. It makes it worse to marry into a lot more luxury."

"How much do you think your friends in the fog would give back to you if they dropped into a soft job?" he asked.

"That has nothing to do with it."

"Yes, it has. It means that they go with the stream and don't drown themselves trying to dam it up with a bunch of flowers. Keep those damned hucksters out of Aldwych and keep it the decent civilised place it was; and breed young Davids to counteract the pernicious spawning of Millport. You'll be far better employed. You can invite all the young Potters to tea and show them what they may attain by thrift instead of greed. They'll only think you a damned fool and not listen to a word of good advice."

Teresa was silent.

"They would take the place off you to-morrow if they could and say you weren't fit to appreciate it. And they would undo the work of centuries that have been spent on it and turn it into a hell of their own."

"They wouldn't. They would want to become gentle people and build it up again in their own way."

"Rot," said Cyril. "Much better keep it as a model instead of wasting it all first. You must keep something in the show room. It is no good for everybody who wants an airship to destroy all there are and begin again by himself with a glider."

"Why are you two silly things sitting together in the dark?" said Susie's voice at the door.

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CHAPTER XVI

"THERE is a good deal to be said for subscription lists all the same," said Mr. Manley. "How could you have the hospitals and other places kept going?" Teresa often went to the old man for help in her schemes, as he had invited her to do on their first acquaintance. They were good friends, though his tolerance of institutions, governors, spiritual pastors and masters puzzled her when she tried to piece it together with the other side of his character; the side which made him impatient with all sorts of pomposity and humbug. He delighted in the removal of lifeless traditions and he welcomed to his house the whole of the small army of people who fought for the life of the city against vanity, self-interest and stupidity.

"But the way people go home to a fat dinner, with servants running round the table with more dishes, after they have sat listening to speeches about all sorts of deadly necessities makes me sick," she said. "They sign a cheque for a sum that is just large enough to look impressive on a list, but that won't make the least difference to the way they live; and then they think they have done everything that can possibly be required of them."

"If would be a dull world if there were no kindness, only obligation and compulsion," he remarked. "I like people who are charitable to the poverty of

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my intelligence, so why not to the poverty of my comforts."

"But if some starving genius were to head a list of people who were kind to Mr. Price's intelligence he wouldn't be grateful."

"Well, if we are going to pounce upon ingratitude and snobbery in one place let us be down on it all round," he said. "I tell you that kindness is a good thing anywhere, and though giving and taking is always a ticklish business because people think too much of themselves, that doesn't make it any less good. By the way, did you know that Fisk has got himself locked up?"

"I am delighted to hear it," said Teresa, "but what for especially?"

"Inciting to breach of the peace. Of course that has finished him so far as his career goes. He never got his degree and now he is too old and too mad. He was quite a decent boy. I used to employ his father and knew him quite well. He was as keen as possible on educating the lad. Cranston has a great deal to answer for, wasting these boys' time so that they don't work at anything. Fisk will have to be a paid agitator when he comes out in order to make a living. He'll never go back to learn a trade now."

"How do you manage to stand the Prices?" Teresa resumed presently, going back to her train of thought. "I have often wondered. And Mrs. Carpenter—— Oh, dear me, I have got to hate rich people since we came here. At first I was worried about the poor. I wanted money not to matter either way, so that one could make friends anywhere and there shouldn't be a barrier of habits

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and manners that some of them were born into and that cut them off from their natural friends in other classes."

"But that is nothing new," he said, "I saw when I first met you that that was what you were after and you thought none of us here had ever had the same idea at all except good old Emma. That is why I wanted to make friends with you. I didn't want the barrier of a rich dinner table to separate you from your natural friend here."

Teresa laughed. "Well, it didn't, you see. But still, I don't seem able to leap across the pine-apples to Mr. and Mrs. Price. What does she mean by saying that her people are communists? It does seem the silliest rot."

"They are intellectual socialists. People who see that the world is untidy, which it certainly is, but they haven't the taste for the characters that can only come out of an untidy world. I am a bit of a reader of the classics, as I haven't a wife to talk to, and I can't see any of the people I love best in books coming out of a world where everything is as neat as a bedded-out garden. I have a great dislike of culture, as it is called. Education is one thing and so is enterprise, and Price is enterprising; but I must say I don't like Botticelli pictures and cocoa in a public-house, and that is what Mrs. Price means by saying her people are communists. They are wealthy themselves with all sorts of art tastes and live comfortably, and they like to preach. They don't understand commerce and are ashamed of having any connection with it. You may always suspect a man who is prepared to run a business he hasn't served in. I've the same suspicion of par-

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sons. They see so many notices up everywhere, "Beware of the Devil!' that they get tripping about here, there and everywhere in such a state of nerves that they forget they are not there to run God's business, but to find out what He wants done. It is all this assuming of moral responsibility instead of working that I think is the mistake. Now you see what I meant when you were running down charitable institutions. You do your bit, my dear, and help to keep the machinery going. You can't run it alone and improvements are being made all the time." Teresa got up to go.

"Do you know Mother is making a speech to-day?" she said doubtfully. "The first she has ever made outside a drawing-room, and I have to go—shall you be there? It is in the small room at the Town Hall."

"What is the meeting for?" he asked.

"The Mary Popley Home for women."

"No," he said, "I have given a subscription, but I am not coming to-day. I am sure she will do it well; she is so gentle and tactful. We want more women like that on our committees. Some of them are so very fierce. That is why I like Mrs. Vachell, though I am never sure what she has got up her sleeve; she's rather an enigma."

"She hates men, that is all I know," said Teresa.

"Does she really? How very remarkable. I never knew that. And living among such excellent men and great scholars as she does! Good-bye, my dear, good-bye."

. . . . .

"I suppose you are not coming, Cyril?" said Susie, later, putting on her gloves. "We are dining

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with the Gainsboroughs after the meeting; without dressing."

"No, your subjects are too deep for me, Sue," he replied. "I'll have something ready to wet your whistle when you come back, and keep up the fire and let the cat out and that sort of thing."

"Strickland will see to all that, dear," she said. "I think you had better go to bed if you feel tired. I expect one of the maids will be up to make tea if we want it."

When they arrived at the Town Hall they were shown into a small room where the general committees of charitable institutions were often held. Reports were read, giving an outline of the year's work and a statement of the financial position and requirements; an attempt was made to rouse public interest, accounts were then passed and votes of thanks to the principal helpers and the chairman were proposed, seconded and carried. Susie had been asked to second the vote of thanks to the committee.

The audience consisted of a large number of her personal friends, a few dowdily dressed women with serious, lined faces, whom she knew by sight, and dreaded a little for their habit of turning up at tea-parties and saying tactless things about the behaviour of young girls in the Park after sunset, the cruelty of parents and the tendency of wives to drink to excess, in spite of industrious husbands. Very often they introduced these subjects just when she herself had been expounding the perfection of the mother instinct or the disastrous result of confidence in a young and innocent mind. They had a way of referring to crime as if it were a flaw

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in a work of art, rather than a snare set by wicked poachers for the Almighty's pet rabbits. A few of the outside public were also present, with the usual vacant faces, perfunctory clothes, thin hair, and those curious eyes of the English stranger, which, if they are indeed windows of the soul, certainly do not belong to a country where romances are carried on at the lattice. Those eyes suggest Nottingham lace curtains and an aspidistra behind the dim panes which the owner never approaches, unless there is a street accident or a ring at the bell. They enclose many human preoccupations, but nothing that is likely to be shared with the passers-by.

Susie faced the eyes, the friendly eyes, the business-like eyes and the aspidistra eyes. The chairman had called on her to second the vote of thanks, after a short-sighted glance round to make sure she was there. Her dimple, the little crease in the satin cushion of her cheek, appeared, and she smiled, catching the attention of the first few rows.

"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen," she began, "I think it extremely kind of you to ask me to second this vote of thanks, because you are all so busy and I am not used to speaking, nor experienced enough in your work to be of very much help. But in thanking our splendid committee for all they have done, I want to try and tell everybody if I can, how deeply I feel that we all ought to do a great deal more to help these poor women. Vice is so pitifully easy to women in a great city like this (murmured approval was heard at the back). I am not going to say anything against men. We are the wives and mothers and sisters of men, and

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the responsibility lies with us (slight signs of cynicism from an aspidistra eye in the fifth row). But what I say is this. All our influence is necessarily—must necessarily be—of no use so long as our girls are wilfully misled by the idea that their love and innocent confidence will be understood and valued at its true worth by the naturally coarser and rougher nature. ("How thankful I am father didn't come!" thought Teresa.) Men go into the world and become accustomed to hardness and cruelty, especially in foreign countries, with which a great port like this is constantly in touch. They drink and quarrel, and their poor homes have so little beauty to encourage them. Is it to be wondered at that a young girl who dreams of romance and her own little home and the sound of baby feet should refuse to believe that these things are of less value to the rough sailor or soldier or merchant, drunk with wine and full of strong passions that have no place in her finer nature? (The chairman, the treasurer and a doctor, who happened to be there, were gazing meditatively at the electric light fixtures, the desk, the floor, anywhere that would afford a sufficiently obscure resting-place for any involuntary expression of opinion on their faces. They felt a friendly approval of Susie as a nice, tender-hearted little woman, but all the same they hoped she would wind up soon.) What I feel so much is this, that although great sympathy and great patience with these poor girls must be shown, and although they must, of course, be taught to see the dreadful evil that they do, yet until wives and mothers and sisters impress their men with a better understanding of a woman's feeling about these

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things, and make them see that the finer and higher view is not necessarily foolish and sentimental—that they hurt us by coarse jokes and rough actions, by mistaking love of motherhood for vulgar flirtation—that until they see all this in its true light it is useless to expect that trust will not be betrayed and happy girls flung back into these Homes, ruined and disgraced. Marriage may mean so much to a girl. It is surely worth an effort from us, who have had our trials and difficulties and misunderstandings, to bring home to the boys who are growing up a sense of those qualities which they lack by nature. I have much pleasure in seconding this vote of thanks to our committee."

She sat down amidst whole-hearted applause from her friends and several of the aspidistra-eyed. The ladies whom she feared gave a few business-like taps with one hand upon the other and fidgeted impatiently. Everything that interested them in the meeting was over and most of them had other engagements or voluminous documents at home to attend to.

The vote of thanks to the chairman and his reply only occupied another ten minutes, and then there was tea in the Lady Mayoress's parlour.

"What a splendid speech you made," said Mrs. Eric Manley, coming up to Susie. "I don't know that I go quite as far as you do about the innocence of girls, but still——"

"Oh, don't you?" said Susie. "Of course a great many are not innocent, because they have been taught so young by seeing all kinds of dreadful things. But I think a woman's natural character is much less suspicious than a man's." Mrs.

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Vachell came up and under the pretext of finding a chair drew Susie away from the crowd.

"I have been waiting to see you," she said. "I have just seen Evangeline off to Drage again and I am very much worried about her. Has she written to you much about herself?"

"No, her letters are generally full of darling Ivor," said Susie.

Mrs. Vachell looked her up and down for an instant as if considering whether she could make a cut in Susie's plump little figure without letting out too much sawdust and spoiling it.

"She didn't tell you that her husband thinks of sending Ivor away from her?"

Susie's eyes grew startled, but she said quietly, "Don't you think you have mistaken a joke of his? Why should he do such a thing?"

"I think he is a little mad," said Mrs. Vachell. "The war shook a good many of them. He was always very strict with Ivor, wasn't he?"

"Oh yes, but then men are so silly about children," said Susie, a little reassured. "They never do understand them."

"You were saying this afternoon that the responsibility for making them understand lies with women," said Mrs. Vachell. "If you really believe that, it is time for you to help Evangeline. Her situation seems to me to be desperate."

"What did he say he was going to do?" Susie asked.

"He told me in confidence that he means to send him away quite soon, in a year perhaps—not to a boy's school, of course, but a sort of place kept by religious ladies. But Evangeline was not to

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know that. He is afraid she might do something violent, come to you and her father or make some public scandal. He hates having his affairs discussed and preferred to wait until the time comes."

"Men are really very tiresome and difficult sometimes, aren't they," said Susie with a sigh. "I do wish they would keep to their own affairs. Suppose I interfered with my husband's soldiers and you put all Mr. Vachell's diggings upside down on the shelves when he had arranged them. I can't think how they can be so stupid. I am dreadfully worried about what you tell me, because, of course, it is all nonsense. If dear Evan suffers from his head that is no reason why he should vent it on a little boy. Perhaps a doctor might advise some tonic that would do him good."

"There is no tonic for a bullying disposition," said Mrs. Vachell.

"Oh, don't you think so?" said Susie. "I am sure the blood has so much effect on those kind of ideas. If people are well, you know, they see things quite differently, though, of course, there are some things that they will never understand, unless they are poets or artists. That makes a great deal of difference, I think, being in touch with beautiful things. Those religious ideas of his are a great mistake, I think; all about Jehovah, and being so full of judgment and wrath and so on. It gives them quite a wrong idea of the Bible. But I think his mother must have been a masculine sort of woman from what he says. Quite a little joke sometimes upsets him. Teresa and I are going on to the Gainsboroughs. Can we drop you?"

All through the evening Susie was a little pre-

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occupied. She was thinking out a plan of campaign by which she might save Evangeline from the harsh authority of her husband, as she had saved her from the prosy ethics of the schoolroom when she was a child. But, as in those days so now, she had no wish to reveal herself as a fighter. Once recognised as a partisan she would lay herself open to attack and perhaps be driven from her high ground of superiority to earthly passions. She represented in her own mind idealism, tender remoteness from all ugly thoughts, innocence of all desires save love for everybody. Could power be more strongly hedged about from attack?

She had a short time alone with Mrs. Gainsborough, as the Principal retired to work in his study and Emma took Teresa away to her room.

"I heard from a sister of mine at Drage to-day," Mrs. Gainsborough began, "that they think they will probably be sent to Egypt quite soon. Will that affect Captain Hatton or will the special work he is doing keep him behind?"

"I don't know at all," said Susie. "I hadn't heard there was any idea of their going, but I think my husband did say that Evan would probably have to move soon in any case. Those special jobs they get are only temporary."

"Would Evangeline go with him?" asked Mrs. Gainsborough; "would it be all right for Ivor?" A possible solution to all difficulties at once presented itself to Susie. "I hardly think he could afford to take them both," she said. "Without the extra pay he has been getting they will have to be very careful for a time, and I hear everything

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in Egypt is an awful price. He may be glad to leave Evangeline and the boy with us; I hope so."

"Oh, poor girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Gainsborough, "she wouldn't like that."

"No, of course it would be a dreadful separation," Susie agreed, "but it might be necessary until he got something else. He probably would very soon. He is so popular with everyone and so high principled. Anything to do with engineering delights him, and I should think there must be a great deal of that sort of thing going on everywhere just now. The whole world is making an effort to better everybody's lives—except ours, of course, who have to pay for it. But one doesn't grudge that. Personally I don't mind how simply I live so long as I can have the things I want."

"I am very sorry I couldn't come and hear you speak this afternoon," said Mrs. Gainsborough. "But the fact is, my old cook, Annie, is being married and we gave her a little send-off from here. She has married such a nice respectable man—a widower—a plumber and decorator; we have known him for years—a man of the name of Fisk. But you know all about young Fisk, the son? How stupid of me! A horrid nuisance he is and a great worry to his father. He won't have anything to do with poor old Annie. Turns up his nose at her altogether."

"How horrid of him!" said Susie.

"Yes, I believe he thinks we arranged it all as a studied insult to him; vulgar little wretch!"

"You will miss Annie, won't you?" said Susie. "She has been with you such a long time."

"Oh, she is not exactly leaving us," said Mrs.

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Gainsborough. "She will still come for the day about eleven o'clock to do all the cooking, and she will go home in the afternoon to give her husband his tea and then come back and dish up the dinner. You see, her home is only just round the corner and he is out all day so she is glad of the company and to earn the extra money. I fancy young Fisk takes a good bit of what his father makes."

They had hardly finished dinner when the maid handed a note to Susie. The girl, she said, was waiting for an answer. It was from Mrs. Vachell.

"DEAR MRS. FULTON," it said.

"You told me you are dining with the Gainsboroughs. I wonder if you would have time to come in here for a few minutes on your way home. If Teresa is tired she could drop you and send the car back? I have heard from Evangeline by the last post with some reference to what I suggested to you this afternoon. She is sure to have written to you at the same time, but I cannot answer her letter without consulting you, and as you are always so busy it might save time if I can catch you between your good deeds."

"Would you ask the girl to tell Mrs. Vachell I shall be very glad to come round later," she said to the maid; then she turned with an apology to Mrs. Gainsborough. "If one once takes up these public things there are so many little details to think out. Mrs. Vachell wants to talk over one or two points that she suggested this afternoon. I will send Teresa home when the car comes in case my husband wonders what has become of us, and it can come back for me to Mrs. Vachell's."

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Mrs. Vachell was alone when Susie was shown up. "My husband is out at one of those dreary men's dinners where they play Bridge till all hours," she explained. "I wanted to tell you, though you are sure to find a letter from Evangeline when you get back, that there seems to be an idea that his regiment is going to Egypt and he will probably have to go with them. In that case he is sure to make it the excuse for the separation I told you of."

"But surely all such things must be decided between themselves," said Susie. "Evangeline and he are sure to talk it over and decide what is best to be done."

"Mrs. Fulton, have you seen your son-in-law lately?" Mrs. Vachell asked, looking at her searchingly. "Do you know how strongly he has got to feel on this point? I have been down there for a month with them and I realised that Evangeline has no idea what an obsession it has become with him. He seemed to want to pour it out to somebody and you know yourself how a man always chooses a woman to listen to him because of the very qualities he despises in her—shall we call it flexibility of judgment? He knows she is not likely to say, 'My dear chap, that's all rot. Have a whiskey and soda?'"

"That is so true," said Susie with a sigh. "How well I know it!"

"You understand then how I come to know more of his intentions than you do. He wouldn't feel that you were an impartial judge and also——" her mouth twitched slightly—"I am afraid he thinks you a little—frivolous. He mistakes your delicacy of thought for want of earnestness."

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"Yes, I daresay," said Susie, slightly stung, "I am quite used to being thought absurd just because there is so much in spiritual things that one cannot explain in black and white. Those very dogmatic people always seem to me to miss the whole point of everything."

"Well, now, the question is this. I know—I tell you this in all seriousness—I know what he means to do with the child at the last moment, and the last moment will come sooner than we expected if he is ordered to Egypt. So please do dispossess yourself of any fancy ideas of its all blowing over or all coming right. What can you do? You will probably offer to take Ivor and Evangeline too. He will refuse because he thinks you are even worse for the boy than she is." Susie betrayed no sign of anger, but her eyes narrowed a little and there was no dimple in her cheek as she listened attentively. "What will you do then?" Mrs. Vachell went on. "There are some terrible women he knows of who keep a school away down in Cornwall. I don't mean that they are intentionally cruel, but Ivor has your sensitive nature. He is a little boy whom you might as well whip with a cat-o'-nine-tails as send to women like that."

Tears sprang to Susie's eyes and her lips trembled. "I will do anything you suggest," she promised. "I don't care what it is. I think I could almost kill him. Thank heaven he trusts you!"

Mrs. Vachell laughed. "It is against all my principles and theories," she said, "but they force us to do these things. Some day when we are in power we can be our true selves and enjoy the luxury of the straight path. At present we lie

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for the children and the women like Evangeline who suffer in their foolish reverence for the male. I don't know what you advise, but I don't see any better way out of it than that Evangeline should be supposed to be going overland to join him and just not turn up. The boy will be left with me on the understanding that I take him to Cornwall as soon as Evangeline has left or perhaps a month or two after."

"It doesn't sound at all the sort of thing Evan would do," said Susie doubtfully. "He is always so very downright."

"No, you are quite right," said Mrs. Vachell. "He hasn't thought of it yet. He has only got as far as the old ladies. But I can make him see the difficulty of a scene with Evangeline. She is very much liked at Drage. Evan's Colonel and his wife are devoted to her. There would be awful talk and gossip and indignation if she let herself go and got the rest of them down on to it. He is secretive and hates outside interference."

"But then why not let public opinion have the chance to make him give in?" asked Susie.

"He wouldn't do that. He would make some plan for a temporary arrangement with me or someone else and it is safer that it should be with me."

"But when you have got him off, what next? The school will be expecting him, they will be furious and write to Evan and he will order you to give up Ivor. He may send a solicitor's letter. He may get special leave and come back."

"That he couldn't possibly afford," said Mrs. Vachell. "It is a very expensive journey just now.

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And as for the solicitor's letter—do you know I am not at all sure that I shouldn't leave that to your husband. I can't tell you why, but I think he could manage Captain Hatton even now; the only thing is that he wouldn't. You have to get things into a mess first before a man like that will move. They never will do anything to prevent a row if it means making a plan, but they will shovel away the mess afterwards quite willingly."

"I think I might sound him," said Susie reflectively.

"Very well, but remember if you give him the least hint of a plan he will forbid you to do it and then it becomes rather a nuisance; it would be fifty per cent. more complicated. If you do the thing first you can pretend to be sorry and say how stupid you were not to have thought of the consequences. A man will always swallow that."

Susie changed the subject. "And what about Evangeline?" she asked. "Shall I write to her?"

"No, indeed, you won't. Don't write a line except the usual grandmotherly stuff. I will ring her up and get her to take a day's shopping in London; I am going there next week. Then after that I will go on to Drage to see a young cousin of mine. Evan will know by that time whether he is going or not. If he does I can persuade him to lend me Ivor for a month or two or even more. Even he understands that he is rather a baby to go to strangers alone and he is sorry for me for having no children——" She gave a little laugh. "You might, perhaps, make it easier by saying that you want to have Ivor yourself, but that there is difficulty about the nurse. He trusts

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her, and she doesn't, in fact, like being with you."

"Doesn't she?" asked Susie, very much surprised.

"No, not at all. She went so far as to threaten to give notice if she stayed with you again. She complains that you spoil Ivor."

"What a horrid woman!" said Susie.

"Yes, you will probably have to get another in the end. But all that will be much simpler when we once get him out there. It is difficult for anyone to make arrangements with such a long post in between."

"Dear me," Susie said with a sigh, "it is all very sad. I think I will go home now. There may be a letter from Evangeline and I can see what my husband says."

"Well," said Cyril when she came back, "Dicky says you are a great orator, Sue. Got the nail plumb on the head and brought tears to every eye. I sent her to bed as she looked tired. Strickland said she was going to bring you some tea as soon as you came in."

"Are there any letters for me?" she asked.

"Yes, I believe there are. I put them down somewhere. Evan has written to me to say that the regiment is going to Egypt and he will have to go unless he gets anything else."

"Is he likely to do that?"

"I don't know. He will have to run his own show now. I should think he is most likely to go." Susie found her letters and looked through them. There was nothing from Evangeline. "I wonder why she writes to Mrs. Vachell and not to me,"

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she thought, but she felt no jealousy; nothing more than a little surprise, such as she might have felt if one of her children had chosen to have tea with the housemaid instead of coming down to the drawing-room.

"What sort of a country is Egypt for children?" she asked presently when Strickland had brought the tea.

"I've never been there, but I shouldn't think it was very good for them," said Cyril.

"Wouldn't it be the best plan for Ivor to stay with us and have a governess?" she suggested.

"Well, I suppose that is for Chips to settle."

"When you talk of her settling do you realise that Evan has very odd views about children and that he is a little obstinate sometimes?"

"What are you getting at, Sue?" he asked. "I haven't studied the insect world enough to be always sure what particular idea you are after. If you will tell me the shape of twig you want to resemble——"

"I haven't an idea what you are talking about, Cyril, but I was asking for Evangeline's sake. You always seem to understand men so much better than I do."

"That is because they say what they mean," he replied. "There is no difficulty about that."

. . . . .

Mrs. Vachell scarcely recognised Evangeline when she rose out of a corner of the shop lounge where they had arranged to meet. She was not only thin and heavy-eyed, but she looked hunted. Behind the sphinx face that looked into hers bitter

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pity was hard at work. "My dear child," Mrs. Vachell said, holding out both her hands, "don't worry. It is perfectly all right."

"But you don't know," said Evangeline in a low, frightened voice. "I haven't told you. He is going to Egypt and insists on my going too. Ivor is to be sent away——" Her voice broke.

"No, no, nonsense," said Mrs. Vachell. "Here, come and sit down. Ivor isn't going away. He will be sent to me first and you won't go on the boat at all. You can either be supposed to join him at Marseilles, or if that makes too much fuss you can go on board and slip off among the crowd when people are being sent ashore at the last minute. There are lots of ways and we will think out the best. Once he is safely off, you will go back to your parents and he will find the devil of a difficulty in dislodging you. It is a temporary remedy, I know, but we shall have time to think of something else when the next obstacle turns up. He is one man against three women, remember. You know your mother by this time. I am not sure but what she is stronger than either of us. And you will have all the regiment with you if they get to know of it."

"But Mother doesn't know," said Evangeline. "I didn't think it was any use telling her."

"Then you are a fool, dear. Never mind; I have told her; and if Evan thinks he is any match for her he is mistaken. He might as well try to fight a climate."

"But how did you know anything about it?" she asked, more and more puzzled. "He only told me yesterday, and I don't know now where he

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wants to send Ivor. It may be to his sisters, which is bad enough."

"I knew a month ago what he intended to do some day, and I made plans for you as soon as I heard that he might be going to Egypt. Don't waste time being jealous of me, Evangeline. I would wring the man's neck like a turkey's if I could."

"Oh, you are wicked!" gasped Evangeline.

"No, I am not. Don't be stupid. You will lose your faith in men too some day, and then you won't stick at anything to help a woman. What other weapons have we to defend our lives as yet? Do you want Ivor or do you not?"

"Do I?" said Evangeline, nervously hunting for her handkerchief. "I didn't sleep last night and I've had no breakfast."

"Very well, have lunch now, then," said Mrs. Vachell, rising. During lunch they matured their plan. Evan had not yet explained definitely where he intended to send Ivor, though he had once mentioned two friends of his mother's, "the best women in the world," he called them. Mrs. Vachell related all she knew of the place where they lived and their methods of training the young mind. Perhaps she exaggerated and perhaps Evan had laid unfair stress on the items he was most anxious about. "They believe in making a child independent of physical comforts," she said, "and not allowing a light in the room at night and that sort of thing."

"Oh, God! Ivor will go mad," said Evangeline. "He is so good about the dark and getting used to it, but he hates it—and without me!"

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Mrs. Vachell shrugged her shoulders. "I came across men in hospital," she said, "to whom their childish terrors used to come back. Of course it made them able to stand anything as they grew up, for nothing they were likely to meet afterwards in an ordinary life could be such torture. But it seems a little like burning down the house to get roast pig. And, after all, the war has shown that it wasn't worth while, because boys from happy homes were just as undefeatable as the children of brutes. In fact some of them who took it most simply had had the happiest childhood. Good schools do just as well now when the boys come by train as when they were frozen on the tops of coaches on the way and tortured when they got there."

"Yes," said Evangeline.

"I shall have to fool your husband a good deal before I get Ivor handed over to me," Mrs. Vachell said, looking at her attentively.

"Oh, I don't mind," Evangeline answered carelessly. "He doesn't love the real you. That is the only thing that would annoy me." Mrs. Vachell gave a little laugh.

"Who says women can't stick together or tell the truth?" she said.

"Do they?" said Evangeline with indifference. "I wonder why."

"Well, let's get on," said Mrs. Vachell. "I must do my shopping in a few minutes. I shall come to Drage next week, and, in the meantime, just behave as you would if you believed it was all going to happen as he says. Try to forget that it isn't; and when I come you will find that the old

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ladies will be postponed for a few months at least. And another thing. You had better beg for Ivor to be sent to your mother. I want your husband to have knocked off that idea before I come or I should have to suggest it and fail. He shall tell you himself that it won't do, and he will be getting uneasy about the old duchesses by that time if you are tragic enough."

"Oh, it is beastly!" said Evangeline. "Hateful! disgusting! How can a man be so mean as to force his wife to filthy, low tricks to keep their only son with her while he is a baby and she has done nothing wrong. How dare he do it! I shall be a wicked woman before he has done with me."

Mrs. Vachell again shrugged her shoulders. "Wait," she said, "it is coming. There can be no stopping it in the end. We are in Parliament; we are almost in the Law; we have one foot in the Church. Wait, Evangeline, my dear. And in the meantime we won't throw away the old weapons till the new are ready. They haven't done bad service in the past."

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CHAPTER XVII

"GOD bless you," said Evan, as he let Mrs. Vachell out of his house about a week later. "I'll tell Evangeline as soon as she comes in. It is an enormous weight off my mind, really. I can't tell you what torture it has been to see the poor girl in that state, and yet it was my duty. I couldn't do otherwise, so it had to be gone through. Now she will be comparatively happy as she will trust Ivor with you and Mrs. Fulton can see him when she wants to—within limits. Evangeline will like that. I have the utmost confidence in the nurse too. I should never have sent her away from him if it had been possible to keep him at home. I have written to Miss Moseley and told her that his coming is only postponed and that I will arrange with her later when you see how he gets on."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vachell. "I will write to you every week or so at first. Good-bye. You sail on the 30th, don't you? I suppose I can make all the final arrangements about trains with Evangeline. She will like to see him settled in before she goes, perhaps, and it will give her time to pack and settle the house in peace."

Evan had refused to listen to the suggestion that Evangeline should pick up the ship anywhere on the way out, so that had been given up. Mrs. Vachell had undertaken to bring off the final coup. Ivor

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was to be established in her house a week before the ship sailed. Evangeline was to pack her trunks as much as possible with old clothes and oddments that she did not need. Evan was out all day, so there was no difficulty about that. Mrs. Vachell would get permission to see them off on board, and would undertake that Evangeline should disappear when the shore bell rang. An errand of mercy in some lady's cabin would prevent Evan from looking for her until some time after the ship had left. Mrs. Vachell would keep him in discussion till the last moment and tear herself away only at the last imperative shouts from the gangway. After that the deluge, and Cyril in the character of Noah.

"I don't like the plan at all," Susie said anxiously, when Mrs. Vachell returned. "I simply don't know how I shall ever make my husband understand. He is quite extraordinarily dense in those ways. And I want to tell the servants to get Evangeline's room ready, and of course I can't. There are all sorts of things to be seen to, and Strickland will be so cross. And I am afraid they will gossip, too. Can't you possibly think of anything else? Couldn't Evangeline be taken ill on the way out and landed, and then she could just come home?"

"I am afraid that soldiers are more easily deceived than doctors," said Mrs. Vachell, "and Evangeline is such a bad actress! How I have pulled her through this week I don't know. But I can keep Ivor as long as you like while you make your preparations. When Evangeline comes off the boat and gets to you, she must just have had a fit of temporary insanity to account for it to your husband; a sort of

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mad motherhood. I understand that she has an excuse for a certain amount of eccentricity. For that reason alone any doctor can be got to say that she is better at home."

"Well, we must try not to worry," said Susie. "I daresay, when you come to think of it, that by the time Evan has several children he will give up a great deal of that absurd nonsense about training. The children themselves will make him forget about it. Marriage does away with so many silly fancies, doesn't it?"

All the same, as the time drew near, she became a trifle restless. One day, unknown to her, Cyril went to have a tooth out. It was a bad tooth, and he felt decidedly uncomfortable afterwards, so he telephoned from the dentist's house to put off an engagement he had made, and went straight home. It happened to be the afternoon Susie had chosen for a box containing Evangeline's belongings to be brought to the house, as she knew Cyril had a train journey of a couple of hours, which would keep him out of the way. He was just fitting his latch-key in the door when a van stopped and a man got out and touched his hat. "A box for you, sir," he said, "would you sign, please." Another man was dragging out the box and Cyril took the paper and read it. "It is addressed to Mrs. Hatton," he said. "Just wait a minute and I'll send a servant." Susie, hearing his voice, was peeping rather agitatedly out of the drawing-room door. He rang the front door bell for Strickland, and went upstairs.

"There's a man with a box addressed to Chips," he remarked. "Is it all right?"

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"Y-yes, I think so, dear," said Susie. "It is just a few things we are to take care of, that she thought might spoil in Egypt. Perhaps I had better see about it. Why are you back so early?"

"I had a tooth out," he explained.

"Well, really, Cyril dear," she said impatiently, "how you men do fuss about every little ache and pain. What would you say if we gave up our work for as little reason as that?"

"I should say you had the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove," he replied. "It wouldn't matter a row of beans." He went off to his room.

"When are we going to see those two to say good-bye?" he asked that evening after dinner.

"They will be coming for a night next week when they take Ivor to the Vachells'," said Susie.

"I still don't understand why he is being sent there instead of coming to us," he observed.

Susie made a little face. "It is just Evan," she said. "He thinks we are not to be trusted with children. Of course I couldn't insist."

"It is very unlike you, Sue, to hand over one of your brood without a murmur. Does Evangeline want him to go there?"

"Certainly not," said Susie unguardedly.

"Well then, I bet he won't be there long," said Cyril. Susie began to wonder whether this might not be a golden opportunity put into her hands.

"If you think it best too, dear, I am not sure it mightn't be the wisest thing to move him here after a little while," she said. Cyril looked at her speculatively, but said nothing at the time. When

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Evangeline arrived he noticed a great alteration in her. She had lost her easy-going acceptance of everything that was said and done. She seemed anxious and analytical, on the look-out for traps, chary of expressing an opinion. She had said good-bye to Ivor, she told them, and Evan had stayed behind to settle a few last details with Mrs. Vachell. She said all this with so much nervousness and lack of interest, as if repeating a lesson, that Cyril wondered more and more. He thought again of the box that had arrived, of Susie's embarrassment, and her anger at his unexpected return. When she went in the afternoon to pay her fortnightly visit to a women's hospital Cyril asked:

"You're not acting altogether on the straight about this voyage, are you, Chips? What's the plot?"

Evangeline pushed back her chair and a look of terror came into her face. She hesitated, but said nothing. He looked at her with concern. "My dear child, I am not going to eat you," he said. "What's the matter?"

"I thought perhaps you knew," she stammered, without realising what she had said.

"What, that your mother had given you away?"

"Yes."

"Well, she did, though she didn't mean to. She was a marvel of discretion, but unfortunately I had a tooth out and came here when I ought to have been stowed in the train, and I met your luggage on the doorstep. She told me it was antiques or something, and I didn't, in fact, think much about it until you turned up. So now you had better tell me what you have both been up to. It is quite evident that you haven't parted from Ivor. How do you

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manage that? Are you going to take him as a cargo of apples or what?"

"No, I am not going," said Evangeline. "I won't go, and if you give me away, I'll—no, I am sorry. I would have told you at first, but Mother and Mrs. Vachell said that men will only help to clear up a mess. They won't ever make a plan to prevent it."

"Oh," said Cyril, "so the plot is pretty deep, is it? How big is the membership?"

"Just us three," said Evangeline.

"Not Dicky?"

"No, no, Dicky is impossible. She wouldn't give it away, but she would want me to fight it out with Evan. But I can't, Father,—I can't, I can't. He has broken my nerve. I would fight for myself, but I can't risk it when it is for Ivor. I can't afford to lose. It is Evan's own fault. I never thought of being deceitful until I met him."

"And Mrs. Vachell?" added Cyril.

"I daresay," she admitted, "but she doesn't want to any more than I do. She says she does so look forward to the day when women won't have to lie. It will be such a luxury."

"H'm, yes, perhaps," he replied, "but we won't go into these gilded prospects now. She's evidently still in a very poor way. But if you don't mind me telling you, I think what you are doing is very risky, though I don't exactly know what it is. How are you going to get off?"

"Just slip off the boat while Mrs. Vachell is saying good-bye to him. He is to suppose that I am in the ladies' cabin looking after someone who is ill."

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"And do you suppose any man is going to find out that his wife has played him a trick like that and yet go on with his voyage and stay over there?"

"Mrs. Vachell said he wouldn't be able to afford to come back," said Evangeline.

"Good God! What a fool the woman is," he exclaimed. "And she and her pack of jelly-brained idiots think that—well, well, Chips my dear, she is not too big a fool anyhow to have properly done poor old Evan. She must have endured the devil of a lot of self-denial in the way of truth lately. A regular Lent of corkers. Chips, I really don't advise you to go on with this. It is all nonsense; Evan is a very decent sort of fellow and I don't suppose he understands in the least that he is worrying you seriously. I'll tell him that I am going to keep you here for a bit, and Ivor too, to keep you company, and that we'll think out a scheme later for you to go out there when he has got ready for you. He can't object, for I don't think you are well."

"No, I am not," said Evangeline, and she burst into tears. "I am going to have another, and I know he will take it away, too, and I shall go mad——"

"Oh, rot!" said Cyril kindly. "Here, buck up. You're not going if you don't want to. Why on earth didn't you talk over this mess before? There——" (the front door bell rang) "that's probably the heavy father coming on the stage now."

"Father," said Evangeline, turning white, "don't tell him——" She fell forward in her chair and fainted, and at the same moment Evan came in.

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"Here," said Cyril holding her, "go down, there's a good fellow, and get some brandy; there's some in the dining-room." Evan raced down and brought back the decanter and a glass, and between them they did their best, lifting her on to the sofa, and Evan tried to make her swallow some of the brandy. She opened her eyes and looked at him with terror, and then sat up. "What is it?" she asked. "Oh please, please, Evan, don't take him away. I will do anything you like."

"Don't take who away, my darling, I don't know what you mean?" he said.

"Here, never mind," said Cyril. "It's all right, Chips. We'll get you put to bed I think, and, there's nothing to worry about; do you understand?" He rang the bell for Strickland, and she came in and stood gazing at them in surprise and disapproval.

"Mrs. Hatton isn't well," said Cyril. "A little influenza or something. Will you get her room ready and put her to bed? Can you walk so far, Chips, if we give you a hand?" They left her in the bedroom with Strickland, and then Cyril faced his son-in-law in the drawing-room.

"I think I'll telephone for a doctor," he said, "just to make sure she's all right. Mix yourself a drink while I look the fellow up." He found the number and took up the receiver. "That Doctor Clark?" he said. "Oh, isn't he? Well would you ask him to come round to Mrs. Fulton's house as soon as he comes in. Now then, Evan," he went on, while he lit a pipe, "let's have this out. You mustn't take the girl away to Egypt just yet. She's all to bits and she's got a holy terror

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of you for some reason. What have you been doing?"

"I am afraid it has been parting from the boy that has upset her," said Evan. "But I considered very carefully before I did it, and I am quite sure it is the only way."

"Only way to what?" asked Cyril.

"The only way to safeguard him from being ruined by weakness and self-indulgence."

"It won't do him any harm to speak of for a year or two," said Cyril, "and then he'll go to school and get it put straight. You'll do him far more harm where you've left him at present with that unscrupulous she-devil of the Nile. Take her back with you on the spare ticket and drop her whence she came."

"Excuse me, sir," Evan said, getting up. "I can't listen to any abuse of Mrs. Vachell. I am sorry Evangeline has sunk to that last resort of slandering her best friend to achieve her end."

"Evangeline didn't slander her, my dear boy," said Cyril. "She was full of her praises because of the magnificent plan she had devised for deceiving you. I arrived home unexpectedly a few days ago and met Evangeline's box on the doorstep. The plan was that Cleopatra was to beguile you at one end of the deck while Evangeline nipped off down the gangway and home. They had a plan all thought out about her ministering to a sick friend in a distant cabin so that you wouldn't look for her until you were well out at sea. Ivor was to join her here then, and after that I don't think they had any clear idea, but they were reckoning on

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your finding it cheaper to stay where you were and storm at them on paper."

Evan's face looked hard and worn, but he showed no other sign of disappointment. "I think I had better go now and ask Mrs. Vachell if it is true," he said. "You know I have only just come from her, and we made an arrangement that Ivor should stay with her for two or three months and then go to some ladies whom my mother knew in Cornwall; they keep a small school for very young children whose parents are abroad."

"Did Chips know of that further arrangement?" asked Cyril.

"Not unless Mrs. Vachell told her."

"Why not? What sort of a fellow do you think you are, making plans with another woman behind your wife's back as to what you will do with your son while she is away?"

"It was the only way," said Evan again.

"The only way to land yourself in the devil of a mess. Upon my word, Evan, it's a pretty beastly sort of thing to do. If it got round to the mess you'd find yourself up against a devilish hard proposition."

"Yes, I know," said Evan. "It was cowardice. I hate hurting a woman if it can be avoided."

"Funny how people deny themselves in little ways," Cyril said reflectively. "There you say you hate hurting a woman, and you go a long way round to find a plan that must hurt her more than anything you could have chosen. Evangeline told me that Mrs. Vachell hates lying more than anything, and she——"

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir," said Evan

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rising. "That is not quite proved yet. I'll be back in half-an-hour."

Cyril, from the window, saw him rush after a passing tram and board it with the expression of the Chief of Police in a cinema drama. "Poor devil!" he said to himself with amusement. "She's going to catch it."

Mrs. Vachell's little maid was greatly surprised when the gentleman whom she had let out of the house not long before brushed past her with some muttered remark when she opened the door, and ran straight up to the drawing-room, where her mistress was having tea. Mr. Vachell had returned from the University and was enjoying himself with a muffin. Evan greeted him hurriedly, and said to Mrs. Vachell, "Can I speak to you a moment alone?"

"No, my dear Evan, I don't think you can with that face," she said, looking at him coldly, "you almost frighten me. Sit down there and have some tea, and tell us what is the matter. Ivor is quite happy having his upstairs."

"He must pack up now and come with me, unless you can contradict what I have just been told," said Evan. "But I know you will——" his voice was almost beseeching. "Evangeline is ill. She fainted and went to bed, and I think she is a little light-headed. She assured her father that you had made a plan to let her slip off the boat as it was starting and to join Ivor here and take him to her father's house——" he paused anxiously.

"Yes, it is quite true," she said without concern. "It evidently isn't coming off now as Evangeline has gone back on it. Still I think she might have

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warned me. It is all the same to me what she does, but it is generally considered not to be playing the game to do that sort of thing."

"Why did you do it?" asked Evan.

"Because it was the only way to stop your monstrous behaviour to a woman and her child. I would have done it for anybody." Mr. Vachell had taken no part in what was going on, but was quietly proceeding with his tea.

"Did you know of this?" Evan asked, turning to him.

"Of course not," he replied. "Is it likely?"

"Of course he didn't," said Mrs. Vachell. "It had nothing to do with him. But he wouldn't have interfered in any case. We are a normal husband and wife; not a potentate and his slave."

"Then would you ring for Ivor and his nurse to get ready, please," said Evan.

"Where are you going to take him?" she inquired.

"I beg your pardon, but that is no business of yours."

"Very well, then, wait a moment please." She took up the telephone from a table beside her and asked for the Fultons' number. Cyril answered it. "Is that you, General Fulton?" she said. "Captain Hatton wishes to take Ivor away at once and will not tell me where he is taking him to. The little boy has hardly had his tea and is tired after the journey. Would you mind telling me what to do." Emphatic sounds were audible from the mouth-piece, and she turned to Evan. "He says I am to tell you not to be a damned fool but to go round there at once. Your wife is very ill. You

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are to leave the child here for the present. What did you say, General Fulton? Do you want to speak to him?" She got up and gave her place to Evan. "Yes—hullo," he said. "Is that you, sir? What's the matter, please,—very well—I will come." He said good-bye to neither of the Vachells, but stopped at the door. "I should like Ivor and the nurse sent to General Fulton's as early as you conveniently can to-morrow," he said, and went downstairs.

"Good heavens! what idiots!" said Mrs. Vachell, pouring herself out another cup of tea, when he was gone. "It is very difficult to do good in this world."

"I know you don't want my advice," said Mr. Vachell, "so I won't give it. But I am sorry there has been such a mess and she is ill. I like the poor girl and she seems to have had a bad time one way and another. Little Teresa will be hitting out right and left I expect."

"Oh, Teresa!" his wife said contemptuously, "is full of old-fashioned prejudices, and her idea of equality between human beings doesn't go beyond incomes."

"If people would study the way things have worked out in the past they would get a better idea of what is likely to happen in the future," he observed. "I think I must go down and do a little work."

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CHAPTER XVIII

"THERE is certainly no question of her going to Egypt just yet," said the doctor when he came downstairs. "She seems to have got a sort of nervous breakdown. Can you account for it in any way?"

Susie had come home just before he arrived, and was apparently greatly fluttered by the scene of confusion that she found, but, in fact, she was secretly rejoiced. "It clears the whole thing up in the most wonderful way," she thought. "Really it almost seems as if Providence did interfere sometimes." She came into the drawing-room with the doctor and found Cyril and Evan talking with perfect friendliness. She put them both down in her thoughts as "extraordinarily lacking in all feeling," but she expressed nothing but cheerful propriety.

"Really I don't know," she said, in answer to the doctor's question. "Evan, Dr. Clark wants to know whether you can account for Evangeline having broken down like this. You were here with her, Cyril, when it happened. Do either of you know of anything?" Both were silent, waiting for the other to speak. "Well?" said Susie impatiently. "You see, I have been out, and she seemed to be all right when she arrived."

"I think it had to do with her leaving Ivor

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behind," said Cyril at last. "Really, my dear, you are a mother; you ought to understand these feelings. She was about to sail on a long voyage, remember."

Susie blushed. "There has been the move too, of course," she said to the doctor. "Everything was arranged in a great hurry and there was a great deal of packing up; and as she told you, she is not strong just now."

"No," he said, "there's that. But I should have thought there was more in it. However, it is not my affair, and if it is a family matter you must do as you like. But whatever it is must be put right somehow, or you may have very serious consequences to deal with. I will come back to-morrow morning, unless you want me before then. But please try to set her mind at rest on whatever it is that is worrying her. It would be much better if you had a trained nurse."

"Little Ivor's nurse is a splendid woman," said Susie. "She has had a hospital training, and Evangeline is used to her. Do you think she could manage?"

"No, I think not," he said. "She seems to be worrying about the child as it is. Have him in the house with her and let her know he is within reach with his own nurse, and I'll send you round another woman, if you don't mind."

Evangeline slept that evening under the influence of some medicine the doctor ordered, and Cyril and Evan were left alone after dinner, while the household were carrying out the numerous requirements of the nurse and preparing another couple of rooms for Ivor.

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It had been decided that Evan must sail with his regiment, but so far nothing had been said about Ivor's future. Presently Cyril remarked, "We had better settle now about the boy, Evan. It looks pretty clear to me that you have got to wait for him to find his level in the ordinary way at a preparatory school. There aren't many years to wait, and I can promise you that there will be nothing morbid about him so long as he is under my roof. You see, if I had had a son I should have had to check his tendencies and all that, and he will quite likely mind what I say more than he would the old women of Cornwall."

"I shall make no inquiries," said Evan. "Since his mother and I cannot act together, and it seems that I shall be responsible for her illness if we act separately, I shall withdraw altogether. I will send her all the money I have beyond what I need for bare necessities, and she has your very generous allowance. I don't imagine she will miss me at all out of her life. Everything has been as wretched as it could be for the last year or two."

"I think you will probably find you want them both back again by and bye," said Cyril. "My wife would tell you, I am sure, that absence makes the heart grow fonder—which reminds me that I very much hope that is true. However, don't let's take it for granted that all is over and Moab is our wash-pot, and so on. It is wonderful how things peter out if you leave them alone."

"Perhaps," said Evan gloomily, "but I am afraid not. What is wrong in the beginning is wrong in the end. I shall go away to-morrow before the boy arrives. He is not likely to ask

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after me much, as he was set against me from the beginning."

"Have a drink before you go up," said Cyril, as Evan rose from his chair. "I am sure you had better." Ten minutes later they were absorbed in a discussion about Egyptian administration, but Evan remained gloomy.

When Strickland brought his breakfast next morning she asked whether he had seen Mrs. Hatton, and how was she?

"I didn't disturb her," he answered, "but the nurse came to the door and told me she was better."

"I think Mrs. Fulton will be down in a few minutes, sir," said Strickland, hesitating at the door. She liked Evan, who was always gravely considerate to the maids and, as she once said to the cook, "never passes us with his hat on." "I may be gone before then," said Evan, "but if so, please tell her I was sorry to go without saying good-bye. I have several things to do on the way to the station." Teresa ran down just as he was putting on his coat.

"Oh Evan, were you going without saying good-bye? Wouldn't you like to see Chips?"

"No, Dicky, I must be off," he said. "Will you write and tell me how she is?"

"Yes, I will, and Ivor too," she promised. "I wish you were not going so early and so far off. You look so bleak. But it won't be long before Chips can go out to you."

"Dicky," he said, stopping with his hand on the door, "don't say anything about Ivor when you write. I would rather not hear. But do what you can for him—and if you marry, have him with you sometimes, will you?" He gave her a kiss

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and went out, and she watched him call a cab from the rank across the road and drive off. She was standing there still when Strickland came to shut the door.

"I don't like the Captain going off like that," Strickland said, when they were back in the dining-room and she was clearing away the plates and cup. "It doesn't seem right somehow."

"I wonder what there is about marriage that is so difficult," said Teresa sadly. "People nearly always behave queerly after a bit. Even if they don't actually quarrel they call each other 'dear'—rather short—and say 'it doesn't matter, thank you,' and dreary things like that."

"I think, myself, better have a quarrel and have done with it," said Strickland. "It is a mistake to think over things too much. If a woman is busy all day working she's no time to bother about the man till it comes to getting his wages off him, and then it's best to be civil."

"But, my dear, it is worse in working men's houses," said Teresa. "If you counted up the quarrels between husbands and wives in some of those small streets!"

"Quarrels, yes, Miss, that's what I said," Strickland replied. "But I thought you were speaking of Captain Hatton going off so cold this morning, and no one able to say exactly what has happened."

Susie came in at that moment and dismissed Strickland with a rather reproving request for breakfast at once. When the door was shut she said to Teresa, "I do hope the maids haven't begun gossiping about Evangeline already. What was Strickland saying?"

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"We were talking about marriage and wondering why it is so difficult," said Teresa. "She was sorry Evan had gone off so drearily."

"Oh, has he gone!" Susie exclaimed. "Really he ought not to have done that. They will think all sorts of absurd things, and now there is that nurse to gossip with. You really encourage them sometimes, dear Dicky, by talking about a thing instead of pretending there is nothing to notice."

"But I didn't know there was anything the matter, except that Chips was ill," said Teresa in astonishment. "I was talking to Strickland about married people's manner to each other. What has happened?"

"Evan made a very foolish and cruel plan to send poor little Ivor to a strict school in the furthest part of Cornwall. There was no persuading him, so Evangeline very wisely took the whole thing out of his hands."

"How?" asked Teresa. "What could she do if he wouldn't do what she wanted?"

"Well you will find, dear, some day," said Susie, "that when a man is bent on doing what is wrong the only way is to seem as if it was all to go on as he says and then trust to Providence to find some way of stopping it when the time comes. Opposition only makes him more determined, and he is more likely to take precautions."

"I thought it was arranged by Evan and everybody that Ivor was to go to Mrs. Vachell's."

"That was Evan's own silly arrangement, certainly, and Mrs. Vachell agreed just for the sake of putting off the dreadful school time. And now you see, mercifully the doctor says that Evangeline

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must, on no account, be worried, so darling Ivor is to come here after all, as he ought to have in the first place, and everything is all right. It is wonderful how things work out if only one has trust."

"But then, I don't see what you are afraid of the maids knowing, and why Evan is so cold," said Teresa, very puzzled.

"Well, of course Evan wasn't pleased with the alteration of plan. You couldn't expect him to be. And Evangeline has got so ill with the anxiety. If she had only trusted to it's coming out right——. But she got run down and worried, and what with one thing and another, she didn't want to see Evan or to hear any more discussion, and I thought the maids would think it so odd. You know how in that class everything is sacrificed to the man because he has the money, and they don't understand anything between a difference of opinion and actual quarrelling."

"I see," said Teresa thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't talk to Evangeline about it, I think, dear," said Susie after a pause. "The doctor says she must be kept very quiet."

Later in the morning Evangeline asked for Teresa to come up to her room. She was in bed, looking white and tired and the nurse was quietly dusting.

"Wouldn't you like some tea, Nurse?" Evangeline suggested. "Strickland is sure to be making some if it is eleven o'clock."

"I don't mind leaving you for half an hour if that is what you want," said the nurse with a smile. "But don't talk about any worries, there's a dear, or you will get your temperature up again. You'll not let her tire herself, will you?" she said to

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Teresa. "And I'll leave this little bell here in case you want anything."

"Everything is quite all right, you know," she said soothingly, as she arranged the bedclothes before departing. "Your husband sent you his best love when he went off this morning, only you were asleep and he wouldn't disturb you. And everything is ready for the little boy when he comes. He will be pleased to see his Mummy again, won't he?"

"Oh yes, yes," said Evangeline, "it is all right. Do go and get your tea, Nurse; we won't do anything."

"Well, did you see him?" she asked eagerly, when the nurse had gone.

"Yes, I did. He was very nice about you. He asked me to write and tell him how you are, and I said I would."

"Forgive me, Dicky, for not telling you what I meant to do," said Evangeline. "But I knew it would make you miserable, and I couldn't stand discussion."

"I don't mind that a bit," she answered, "but if you get into a mess again, Chips, do tell Father. I think Mother's way of deceiving men on principle is a mistake, apart from whether it is right or wrong. I think you could have got Evan to do anything you liked if you had told Father, because, after all, it was quite reasonable, only I expect he didn't in the least understand. You told me once that if you want to make him see your side of the argument you have to translate it into different terms, because he uses other ways of expressing the same things. You see, Father would probably have used very

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bad language and said that the school Evan wanted was kept by a lot of damned tea-drinking, blanketty-blank-I-don't-know-what's, and then Evan would have understood that it wasn't really a good plan."

"Well, it is done now and he is gone," said Evangeline. "I shall never see him again. I've deceived him and that is the end. But if he hadn't told Mrs. Vachell what he meant to do I should never have found out. I knew nothing about the school until she told me."

"Didn't you! Oh, Chips, how horrid! But then, he must have deceived you, too, so it is rather like what Mother says about being 'taught to be wicked.' It is so odd if you come to think of it that what she says should really come true, perhaps for the first time; though it is too near the bone to be so funny as it might be."

"Do you know, I never thought of that," Evangeline remarked, "but, of course he did. That makes it a lot better."

"No it doesn't. It doesn't make any difference either way. But, at least, you can both say you are sorry and start again."

"But Dicky, I didn't tell you—there is going to be a new one, and then everything will begin all over again. I could perhaps have held out until Ivor goes to school in the ordinary way, which of course I want him to, and after that he will be able to look after himself; but I can't go through it all with another." Her eyes looked large and startled.

"But he hasn't done Ivor any harm," Teresa protested, "and he will see by and by that he is not a tiresome little boy, and then he won't want to interfere."

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"But the strain of perpetually smoothing things over and avoiding rows——. You don't know what hell it is. We never laugh now except when he's out of the house, and when I hear his latchkey it is like hearing the prison door shut again after one had escaped."

"For the Lord's sake don't cry," said Teresa, "or the nurse will never let me up here again. It is all over now, Chips. There's months and months for things to settle, and they always do settle. Nothing ever goes on as it is. I wish it did sometimes, but life is a very restless thing, like the kind of person who is always saying, 'Well, what shall we do next?' You will see something will turn up."

But months went by, and nothing did turn up. The carrier sparrows of Millport somehow disseminated the news that the Hattons had had a split. One report said that Evangeline was looking ill and went nowhere. This was contradicted by someone who had met her at the theatre, "In quite her old spirits." Mrs. Carpenter determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and invited Evangeline to tea. She refused, so Mrs. Carpenter called on Susie and found Mrs. Gainsborough there. Evangeline had gone to stay for the week-end with her sisters-in-law, Susie announced with secret pleasure. No one but herself knew what a relief it was to have such a respectable piece of news to impart. For since Mrs. Carpenter's visit of inquiry during the summer holiday she had been in daily dread of what the mysterious "little bird" then alluded to might not choose for its subject next time it sang songs of Araby to its kind patroness.

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"The Hattons are charming girls and devoted to Evangeline," Susie added.

"I suppose she will be going out to her husband soon," said Mrs. Carpenter. "She will get the climate at its very best about now I should think."

"Oh dear no, she is not going to Egypt," said Susie, with great surprise at such an idea. "She gave that up from the very first. It was really foolish of her to think of it at all, but she was so anxious to be with him. But Doctor Clark says it would never do to take the risk. It would be difficult to get a proper nurse out there, and either to keep a baby out in the heat or to bring it home such a long way would be risky. No, there is no idea of that."

Susie had always had a lurking taste for critical situations requiring skill in manipulating censorious persons, and whenever she managed to get out of a difficult place with credit, she always felt an increased sense of safety from the snares of the stupid and downright who persist in making life difficult by wanting everything set down in black and white.

"Oh certainly, you are very wise," Mrs. Carpenter agreed, "though it always seems hard on a husband when he is away a long time. Dear Mamma always insisted on going out to India whatever happened. One of us was even born at sea when the doctor had said that he wouldn't be responsible for her unless she spent one hot weather at home. However, she was back again that autumn and we were all left with dear Grannie until Papa came home for good."

"I never think that mothers were so wise in those days as they are now," said Susie. "One reads of so

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many little lives sacrificed to theories of that sort. Mothers away, careless nurses and governesses, cold bathing and all sorts of tyrannical rules. They did nobody any good that one can see."

"Don't you think that generation were very much stronger, though, than the present one?" asked Mrs. Carpenter. "I do, and I think they were more high principled."

"Oh no, I don't think so," Susie answered in gentle rebuke. "Look at the drinking that went on, for instance. Even gentlemen used to spend their evenings under the table, unable to sit up, and they did just as they liked, and no one dared to say anything. The divorce laws are improving all the time now, though, of course, it is still dreadfully wrong whichever way you look at it. Still, I think people have higher ideals than they did."

Mrs. Carpenter was completely crushed for the moment. Susie had left no opening for her to score, for modern ideals were her own favourite topic, which she was sometimes unwisely tempted to confuse with the superiority of her own infancy. Susie, though she was by nature always anxious to smooth over all friction between other people, and to establish her own spiritual triumph over sordid dispute, had lately passed through a dangerous crisis, owing to the fact that her own intrigues against her son-in-law might be exposed at any moment by Evangeline's impatient candour or Mrs. Vachell's boastful contempt for male authority. It was necessary that she should build for herself a strong pedestal of Courage-to-do-what-is-right-at-all-costs, and she chose to cement it with a plastering of the Best Modern Thought. Once her position was on a

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solid foundation, she would withdraw again behind her inviolable mist of vagueness. It is easy to imagine how foolish a veiled figure of Mystery would look, toppled over and broken, with nothing left but some meaningless drapery and wire, compared to that of, let us say, Nelson, whose every separate feature and limb would retain its individuality, whether erect above the ground or scattered upon it.

"These strikes are very terrible," Mrs. Gainsborough remarked, seizing upon the nearest current topic in order to save herself from the perils of controversy into which she might be drawn at any moment. Poor woman! She chose badly.

"It is all very largely the fault of so-called education," said Mrs. Carpenter, pulling herself together for a new line of self-assertion. "They insist on everybody being taught to read, and send working-men to the Universities, and then are surprised that they read the wrong things. Of course they read whatever is sensational, just as our maids prefer trashy novels about peers marrying housemaids, and they won't look at the classics. All that the strikers want is gramophones and pianos that they can't play and motors to go to work in instead of trams. They are far better paid than our wretched clergy, for instance. I looked in on little Jenny Abel the other day, and found her and the children having tea with nothing but bread and a scraping of margarine, and all of them with colds, and Jenny simply worn out with doing all the housework and the cooking. The small girl they had had gone off to a place where she was getting £35 a year; more than Jenny has

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to dress herself and all the children. The girl's mother took her away because she said she wasn't properly fed and had too much to do. Said she shouldn't touch margarine. 'Nasty poor stuff, I call it!' she said; and the girl must have butter and jam and something hot for supper and every afternoon off from three to six and two evenings a week out until ten."

"But I really don't think you would find those sort of girls very much educated," said Mrs. Gainsborough nervously. "They are not the kind who take scholarships. They are, in a way, more like some of the girls one meets about in society just now; selfish, you know, thinking of nothing but amusing themselves."

"I don't know at all where you meet such girls, dear lady," Mrs. Carpenter answered rather acidly. "All my friends' daughters whom I can think of are taking up professions."

"Yes, but rather for the fun of it, don't you think?" poor Mrs. Gainsborough suggested, plunging more and more wildly. "They don't like to be worried by home life and they prefer working with men and so on. It is very natural, poor young things. Just what I should have done myself if I had been born later."

"My dear Mrs. Gainsborough, how shockingly indiscreet!" said Mrs. Carpenter with a silly little laugh. "I hope you won't go round the University saying that women take degrees in order to be with men. You will raise a nice hornets' nest if you do."

"Oh dear me, no, that is not in the least what I meant," stammered Mrs. Gainsborough. "Most of the girls are splendid and don't run after the boys

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at all. But I meant that I don't think that they care about domestic things so much and that it is partly to escape from them that they take up professions. I can't believe that some of them who are really pretty and charming can care very much for mathematics and the other subjects of that sort that they take."

"Evangeline was telling me that she read in some paper that socialism is taking a great hold in the Universities," said Susie. "I think it is a pity, because though it is a nice idea in many ways it doesn't seem practicable. What you were saying just now about Mrs. Abel just shows that everybody is not fitted for the same kind of work; and either very strong people would get into mischief from not having enough to do or else the weaker ones would die through having too much to do."

"I think the chief difficulty would be with the ordinary British working man," said Mrs. Gainsborough, innocently. "They do so dislike regulations of any sort, and if they chose to stop work for any reason I believe they would always do it. They would take no notice of orders or shots or anything. They are so unused to not doing what they want and you can't argue with them. They would just say it was all nonsense. They are very strong and not at all hysterical like foreigners. They never paid the least attention to rationing, you remember, during the war; no tradesman dared to enforce it in the industrial districts. They don't mind losing their lives but they seem to think it so silly to be ordered about at home and so it is, I quite agree."

"Of course," said Susie, placidly, "if anyone

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could be found who had really enjoyed a revolution it would be different and one would have more sympathy. It is worth any sacrifice to make people happy. But beyond a few brutal kind of men, who I am sure are either naturally disagreeable or not English, it seems to make everyone discontented. Even the people who make themselves comfortable in ruined palaces must be afraid of someone wanting to turn them out. It all seems so gloomy from what one reads. Must you really go? I hope you will come back, Mrs. Carpenter, and see Evangeline when she comes home. Now she is here for good she will want something to interest her. She might help you perhaps at Christmas with your parcels distribution. Dear Evan was so anxious she should be too busy and happy to miss him just now."

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CHAPTER XIX

JUST before Christmas, Teresa met Lady Varens in a shop. "My dear, I am so glad to see you," said the soft voice that reminded her of Aldwych and her first happiness there. "Come and have tea with me somewhere. I have a great deal to tell you." Teresa's heart bounded and bumped. It seemed a year before the girl behind the counter located her particular little wooden ball from among the dozens that were bowling along the wire above her head, carrying little scraps of paper and small change to a stupid public who did not know David. She followed Lady Varens through the crowd to a shop on the other side of the street, where they sat down at a table shut away in a recess off the main room. "What would you like?" Lady Varens asked; "tea and crumpets?"

"Oh yes, anything, awfully," said Teresa, hardly able to hide her impatience.

"David is coming back next week, did you know?" said Lady Varens. "Has he written to you?"

"No," said Teresa; "I haven't heard from him for a year." Tears came into her eyes, but she flattered herself that they were unobserved.

"We are both going to stay with Mr. Manley," Lady Varens went on. "I had just let my villa and was going to friends in Rome when David's

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letter came; but I didn't want to lose any time by bringing him round all that way so I came here and Mr. Manley wants us both to go to him. We must settle finally with the Prices whether we take Aldwych back next year or whether I go out with David to the Argentine. He has a charming house there."

"Oh," said Teresa, "and which do you think you will do?" Her heart seemed to have stood still for a year, waiting for the answer, before it came.

"I don't know at all, but old Bessie, David's nurse, who writes to me sometimes from the village, says they are all longing for him to come back. The Prices seem to have put everybody's back up. None of the outside people will stay if he buys the place and he makes all sorts of mischief with the bailiff and the farmers, imagining he is being robbed of sixpence somewhere or other. He says that if he buys it he is going to get an American expert over to run it all on some new system by which everything is organised and checked automatically, and the output, as they call it, of every grain and cow and rabbit and man and boy on the place is ascertained, and if it doesn't work out at the maximum the animal is destroyed and the man is sacked."

"Oh, David must come back," said Teresa. "It sounds too horrible."

"Very well then, dear, tell him so," said Lady Varens, drinking her tea peacefully without a hint of intention in her voice.

"I can't think why the man in the Bible was told to give all his money to the poor if it wasn't the right thing to do," said Teresa. She put her chin

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on her hands and puckered her brow over some inner problem.

"I think it was probably suggested more for his benefit than for that of the poor," said Lady Varens. "It is the giving that matters much more than who gets the stuff."

"Do you really think so?" said Teresa.

"Yes, personally I do. People can only be governed by the qualities that are in them, and a state can't make them equal, because it is made up itself of inequalities. It can never be made into an automatic machine; it is alive—made of live things. I can't understand how even decent socialists can expect it to act as if it were a machine. Of course one knows what bad communists are after. They are just criminal tyrants who want to be beasts in control instead of controlled beasts. But the good ones make me desperate. It is so impossible to imagine anything but disaster coming from their innocent idiocy. They seem to go on blindly hoping that human intelligence can devise a scheme that is proof against human intelligence. They are dear things but I do wish they would take their hobby horses to some place where the bad boys couldn't harness them to the cart that will land us all in the ditch. They think they can out-theorise history and all forms of religion."

Two little tears rolled at last down Teresa's cheeks and were lost in the cup with which she tried in vain to hide them. Their salt taste symbolised to her the bitterness of her failure.

"Oh, bother it!" she said; "I give up here and now trying to do any good. It is no earthly use."

"David said that when he left Oxford," said

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Lady Varens, lighting a cigarette to avoid Teresa's eye. "But in a way he works harder than ever at it now."

"Does he?" Teresa answered with elaborate indifference.

"Yes; won't you come to dinner with us while we are with Mr. Manley? He said I was to ask anyone I liked and he loves you."

"Yes, I would like to."

"Very well; come next Thursday if you are not too busy," said Lady Varens. "By the way, how is your sister? Are they still at Drage?"

"Oh, no—dear me, it is a long story to tell you all the things that have happened since you left. But Evan is in Egypt and Evangeline and Ivor are with us."

"I am sorry; that sounds dreary," she said. "I never knew your sister well, but I liked him though he seemed so different from her. I often wished he had thought of going out to the colonies or something of that sort. I believe it would have suited her. I can't see her in a garrison town."

"She used to say she would like to lead two lives at once," said Teresa. "One a sort of Wild West business and the other with someone very literary, but Evan isn't either, so I suppose people compromise or do something different from what they intended."

"Tell me, Teresa," said Lady Varens, "I am not asking from curiosity; is it a success?"

"Chips could make a success of almost anybody who didn't interfere with her," Teresa replied. "She is not at all exacting and she is so affectionate. But Evan is a little like John Knox or that sort of

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person; then she does things without telling him and he gets all sorts of ideas into his head. I do hate Mrs. Vachell. I think she does more harm than a thousand mothers-in-law." Lady Varens laughed.

"Do be careful what you say about mothers-in-law. When David marries I shall remind you of that remark and ask you not to suggest to my daughter-in-law that I interfere, because I don't."

Teresa blushed and looked vexed. "I had forgotten about you, really," she said. "But Mrs. Vachell came to stay by the sea when Chips and I were there with Ivor, and it all went wrong after that. I don't think they were ever happy again. And I believe she only did it out of sheer spite because she hates men."

"Does she? I should never have guessed that," said Lady Varens.

"No, nobody would. She never says a word, but she used to get at that wretched boy Fisk, at the University, and put him up to all sorts of revolutions; not because she cares twopence about the poor, I think, unless they are women, but she wants women to govern everything, and I think she got him to believe that they would all help a revolution for the sake of making laws to get what they want for themselves. Don't you think that Miss Smackfield would probably drop her Bolshevism if there were any women capitalists?"

"I don't know that I or anyone else knows exactly what a capitalist is. But do you seriously suppose Miss Smackfield cares a hang what any row is about so long as she can be in the front with an

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axe, shouting, 'Off with his head!' like the Queen of the pack of cards. She would be forgotten to-morrow if someone put a flower pot over her."

They talked for some little time and at last Lady Varens said, "It is so difficult to remedy anything, from a disease to a grievance. There is always a 'vicious circle,' not one thing alone that is the matter. People are ill because they fuss and fuss because they are ill. There are some, I think, who want a revolution because they are miserable, and others who are miserable because they want a revolution, another lot who make other people's misfortunes an excuse for making a row and some more who put all their misfortunes down to other people's love of making a row. If you take a human body in that sort of contradictory mess into a doctor's consulting room, he pays no attention to the details, but tells the patient to wash in the Ganges or eat a lightly-boiled onion an hour before sunset with his back to the north; or else he tries psycho-analysis or hypnotism."

"Oh, does he?" said Teresa, who was quite bewildered by this time.

"Yes, he does, and once upon a time it was done with incantations and charms, or the fat of a dormouse was rubbed under the ear. There was Christianity too, with all sorts of by-products in the way of Reformations and Crusades—but you see my point. A really engrossing superstition or a creed with a ritual would be more useful than discussing symptoms of national neurasthenia. Any idea that is unselfish and clean would do, and Bolshevism isn't either; it is both selfish and dirty."

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"But you can't preach unselfishness to the unemployed," Teresa objected, "not, anyhow, so long as there are 'boudoir gowns for my lady when she snatches a moment's rest in her strenuous afternoon,' advertised in the papers. If I were an unemployed, I should want to tear my lady in pieces, and roll her beastly maid with the sofa and the pot of chocolate over and over in the mud on the Embankment."

"That's illogical," said Lady Varens. "I have to shut my eyes tight when I see advertisements of anything to do with my lady, because I know that that sort of indignation is off the line. Communism is dreary and crushing and impossible, I think; and if you are going to let people keep the money they or their fathers make, then you must let them alone to spend it as they like. There are idiots in every class who chuck money about. But, as I say, if you are going to admit freedom to inherit and make, you must have freedom to spend as well, or else Rule Britannia becomes Rule Bolshevina, and my dear friend, the British working man, who hates to be hustled, will have to set up his apple cart again in some other place."

"No, it is quite true, it won't suit him a bit," said Teresa, thinking of Mr. Jason.

"I have tried to imagine the very beeriest British loafer being made compulsorily drunk at stated intervals by a public authority, and I can't see him getting a bit of pleasure out of it. And as for being compulsorily busy, and obliged to see nothing but good plays, and sent to hear good music—has any real Englishman ever devised such a plan, or are they all those very unhumorous Huns in

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disguise? Only a nation that wears spectacles could picture England as a community with rules, except the ordinary policeman rules. But the people have got so used to freedom that they may let the thing go on and stand watching it like a dog fight until it is done and has to be cleaned up."

"That is what Mrs. Vachell said about Evangeline, that father wouldn't interfere about Evan until he had actually done something. She said that men won't bother to prevent a thing happening."

"What are you talking about?" said Lady Varens.

"Oh, I forgot, I was thinking about what you said. Evan did rather try to work out theories about Ivor and there was a bother that there needn't have been if he and Chips had understood each other instead of working separately. However that is nothing. I expect they will worry through all right."

"Well, come and see David," said Lady Varens, "and help us to decide what we will do. He is all for stopping a muddle before it is too late."

Teresa went home in a tram, among the faces in the fog, but she did not notice them. She was tired to death by problems and counter problems; by desires that seemed to lead straight to a just and happy end, and were blocked always, sooner or later, by some defect of the quality that engendered them. Equality had a way of elbowing the grace of respect off the path, social recognition bred snobbery and civic responsibility led to jobbery, philanthropy grew so easily into impertinence, reform into self-righteousness and contentment into smugness; there seemed no end to the

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fine and stupid ideas that had started along the same road. Innocence and discipline fought for perfection in every imaginative task. She saw a world full of Evans and Evangelines quarrelling irreconcilably for ever, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

The car trundled and swayed, grinding along its rails. The distorted, grotesquely-dressed forms that had been made beautiful all these years in her imagination by the belief that they were princes and princesses in disguise, waiting for the magic touch of recognition to restore them to their kingdom, failed for the first time to excite her interest. The desire which used to entice her with the promise of a new world had vanished, and left in its place a message rather like the traditional note on the pincushion left by the escaping heroine of romance. The message said that the only truth on which heaven and earth were agreed was that a marriage would shortly take place.

She cheered up a little as she looked at the fog-bound faces on either side of her, and thought how greatly any of them might be improved by loving any one as much as she loved David. Another still more cheerful idea occurred to her, that perhaps they did! Perhaps it was only the mud filtering down upon the city that made them look so depressed. Inside their minds there might be an inextinguishable flame that only needed to be kindled to destroy all anger and discontent. "I suppose there will always be Evans and Evangelines," she thought, "all the Tweedledums and Tweedledees, and they will fight about nothing whenever they meet; but if they were really in

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love Evan wouldn't look for trouble and Evangeline wouldn't try to walk round it; they would go through it together as it came. I am glad David doesn't either worry or shirk—but then, of course, he wouldn't."

When she reached home she went up to the nursery where Evangeline was putting Ivor to bed, it being nurse's afternoon out. When he was tucked up and Evangeline was tidying the nursery, Teresa sat down by the fire and said, "I met Lady Varens and had tea with her. David is coming home in a few days, and they are going to stay with Mr. Manley. They are going to make up their minds what they will do with Aldwych."

"Oh, are they?" said Evangeline. "Do you suppose they will go back?"

"I should think quite likely."

"You look very pleased, Dicky," said Evangeline, looking at her sister's face in the firelight. "I am so glad if it is all right. But Dicky——" she hesitated in a frightened way—"you know I have no nerves in these days, and I get unnecessary panics—, don't build on his being the same as when he went away, will you? You know what men are."

"Oh, Chips, do drop that men and women business," said Teresa wearily. "There are men and men and David is David."

"I know," she admitted, "but you see Evan is also Evan, so I warn you from my experience—quite kindly meant, and you are angry, quite fairly."

"I think you would like him best to be Evan if you loved him," said Teresa. "He wouldn't be

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'men' any more, and you wouldn't compare him with yourself."

"I do love him," Evangeline answered; "but he thinks I don't because I deceived him."

"Do you suppose he doesn't love you because he deceived you?"

"I am sure he doesn't, because men—I am sorry, I won't say it. But he is always talking about 'women' too. In fact, he began."

"Do you know, as I was coming up in the tram it occurred to me how like Tweedledum and Tweedledee you two are, and now what you say makes you more absurdly like. They never knew which began the quarrels. You need a 'monstrous crow' to send you both flying into one another's arms. Of course if you were in a book Ivor would have a dangerous illness or something silly like that."

"That would only make us hate each other more because he would say that God did it for our good, and I should say that God was sorry the devil did it."

"And suppose Ivor died, whose doing would you say it was?"

"No one's doing at all. But I should say the devil made the germs and that God did nothing, except that He was glad to have Ivor back."

"I am sure that is very bad theology," said Teresa, "You can't have Badness with a definite intention and Goodness without any."

"Why not? Intentions mean brains and theories and I do loathe them more than I can tell you. I'm content with things that are alive and perfect; I mean without diseases and sins. One doesn't need any intention for loving the sun and every-

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thing that I call 'God.' But Evan sets his brain humming and buzzing like a factory to make up the awful Moloch of a creature that he worships."

"It is very odd," said Teresa, "how people have always been more annoyed by each other's religions than by anything else. I am myself. I could put up with Mrs. Carpenter's face, if it were not for the things she says about the Church. But there we go again! I suppose if a monstrous crow could frighten quarrellers apart a monstrous dove might prevent them from fighting; but I don't know, and there would probably be some drawback to that too; there always is. I am going to meet David next week."

"You know, I can't go on living at home for ever," said Evangeline. "I shall have to arrange something when all this business is over, and what am I going to tell people? I can't keep an unexplained husband in the background all my life. Just think of it! Very little money, no man, no father for the children and no explanation to give. I shall have to become a paid agitator in self-defence."

"To agitate about what?"

"Oh, anything. Mrs. Vachell belongs to all sorts of societies. I might help to run a paper. I've always liked papers."

"Yes, I know you have," said Teresa. "I think, Chips, if you hadn't sat so comfortably in the sun, and been content with sensations you might have found out more for yourself. Isn't that why we called you 'Chips,' just because you were always picking up bits of information? I always think of toast and newspapers when I remember you as

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my elder sister in the nursery. Either with toast and newspapers by the fire or else out in the garden when you ought to have been somewhere else. Do you remember when you brought in a worm when we were away in the country, and you put it on a doll's chair on the tea table, and tried to make it sit up, and Miss Jacks came in? But to go back to your newspaper; you can't do that. Do wait until you are well again, and then go away from Mrs. Vachell, and write to Evan. I am not sure you hadn't better leave your family with nurse and me somewhere, and go to Egypt yourself; but, anyhow, it will be all right. I have told you things are always happening."

"Evan's sisters are another problem," Evangeline said presently. "They don't know anything yet, but they keep on wanting Ivor to go there, and when they do find out they will do everything they can to get him taken away from me. They will think I am an active danger if I differ from Evan in any way. And they are so silly with Ivor. They do spoil him so."

"I think that is awfully funny," said Teresa. "Doesn't it amuse you if you think of it?"

"You mean because Evan complains of me spoiling him? But then, you see, I don't and they do. You never saw such drivel as they carry on. Ivor gets quite imbecile when he is there; he hardly seems the same. It isn't gaiety, it is a sort of orgie of pranks; like those wearisome film comedies where a lot of people slip up on a piece of soap, and get covered with whitewash and food Really when I am staying there I often feel like asking the cook to shoot me into the dining-room by the

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hatch and fling a basin of custard after me just so as not to damp the party."

"Doesn't Evan mind that?"

"No, he doesn't, because it is something that can be explained. It doesn't amuse him, but he can pigeon-hole it as 'all good girls' ' way of amusing themselves. It has nothing to do with him, but it is a necessary cog in the machinery of a nice family so he can get on with something else while they do it. It is almost like a domestic rite. But when I enjoy myself he thinks it is moral indulgence because it isn't planned out and it isn't tiring."

"I don't know how father gets on so well with all sorts of different people," said Teresa. "It never seems to bother him if they don't understand what he is talking about. He never tries to explain himself or cares whether they agree with him or not."

"No, I daresay, but then he has only got himself to bother about," said Evangeline. "If he had to protect us from a wife with high principles it might make him think a bit."

Teresa dreaded telling her mother about the Varens' return. Experience has taught me that there are many painstaking minds who will come to a knot at this point, and want to be told why any young girl with a clear conscience should dread to tell so amiable and good a mother that an eligible young man, dear to them both, has returned to the neighbourhood. But it cannot be made quite clear to all readers. The nearest thing that can be said is that perhaps if Susie had been known to approve less of the possibility with which Teresa was secretly aglow, the girl would have been less

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anxious to keep it to herself. "Alice in Wonderland" is full of the everyday experience of simple people, and in one of those irrational gambollings of the female mind which have been referred to on another page I seem to see Susie represented by the kindly Dodo who said to Alice after she had won the race, "I beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble," and presented her with her own property. Teresa was as straight-forward as Alice, and liked things to work out logically, so she resented being led up to her lover, as much as she disliked hearing Mrs. Carpenter instruct Mrs. Potter in the art of patience.

She decided now that the dangerous moment could be most successfully faced under Cyril's protection, so she announced at dinner, "I met Lady Varens to-day, and they are both coming back, probably for good." She made the news sound as gossipy and impersonal as she could, and shot a rapid glance at her father.

"I am glad to hear that," he replied. "The Perkin Warbecks can now resume their normal occupations."

"Who are they?" she said.

"I don't know who they were, but I remember being sent to bed because I didn't know that they aspired to the throne. I've remembered their beastly names ever since."

"They are staying with Mr. Manley," Teresa went on, "at least she is, and David is going there next week. I promised to go to dinner one evening, so I can tell them about the Perkin Warbecks. It is nice to think how pleased the farmers will be, isn't it?" She felt some pride in the way she was conducting this affair.

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"Very nice, dear," said Susie quietly. "Do you know at all how he got on in the Argentine?"

"No, she didn't say," Teresa answered.

"I thought perhaps you might have heard sometimes," said Susie. "So often out in those lonely places people are so glad of posts, and they write and tell one all sorts of things about themselves, just with the idea of getting an answer. I remember I had a cousin who used to write dreadfully dull letters all about the country and then strings and strings of questions."

Teresa need not have been afraid. Her mother did, as Evangeline had pointed out, achieve what seemed like conjuring tricks in the lives of other people, but she only prepared spiritual omelets in places where no omelet was likely to be made in the ordinary way. Having satisfied herself now that Teresa had been completely cut off from David while he was away and was full of suppressed excitement at his return, she was too great an artist in mystery to use apparatus when the laws of nature were already operating in the direction she wished.

Three days after this was Christmas Day, and both Susie and Teresa had a busy day before them. Susie was to attend a tea and distribution of useful Christmas presents to the inmates of the Mary Popley Home, and Teresa was to help serve dinner to some hundreds of street urchins, members of one of the many organisations with which Emma's devoted band worked ceaselessly and hopefully, undeterred by rumours of class war or theories about the reconstruction of the State. Emma's workers got on with the business of cleaning the city as best they could, while Fisk, the people's friend,

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raved of blood and destruction, and then went home to tend his dormice. Teresa's post was at the end of a trestle table with nearly fifty boys on each side. She was buttoned up to the neck in an overall; her face was hot from the stove beside her and from the crowded atmosphere; her head felt bursting from the smell of poor homes and the clapper of voices; her feet were icy from the draught along the wooden floor which was only separated from the street by an open door and a long stone passage. In front of her was a gigantic hot-pot, replaced by another as soon as empty. She held in her hand a long iron spoon, greasy from top to bottom and heavy to wield. At her elbow were a pile of plates, which were snatched up and borne away by other helpers as fast as she filled them. There were three tables altogether, and the same thing was happening at both ends of each. Other people, visitors and members of the committee, stood about the room and looked on, giving a hand with any extra job that was needed. When the last plate was filled Teresa had a moment in which to look at the faces down the table. They were all faces from behind the fog, but they were young, and the Great Depression (as she called the public expression of countenance when she first came to Millport) had not yet reached them. Many of them were pale and pinched, many were apple-faced, some fat and white, but they were all young and as free as squirrels. They bore marks of cold and hunger, some of them of cruelty and disease, every single one of them had a cold in the head and took no notice of it. "The plum pudding, Miss——. May I pass?" said a voice beside her, and, as she moved,

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a monstrous pudding was put before her and the helpers pawed the ground in their impatience to be off with the plates. Teresa doled out great helpings of the stuff as fast as she could, grasping her heavy spoon with both hands. Once more she had time to look at the boys. They were not talking now; they were stuffing, and they had said all they had to say to their neighbours. She saw one of them deposit a large tablespoonful of the pudding in a pocket of his little age-worn waistcoat, and in the horror of the moment she exclaimed, "Child! what on earth are you doing?"

"It's for me granny," he said, "she's sick." Teresa experienced the upheaval of mind and body that used to shake her with a general sense of topsy-turvydom when she first took up Emma's work, and which she had nearly lost during the last years. She remembered Ivor as she had left him that morning, happily engaged in discussion on seasonable topics of revelry, she thought of dirty little faces assembled outside toyshops lighted up early on account of the penetrating fog; she had a vision of the Price family in paper caps seated among a débris of hothouse dessert and wine and coffee and expensive trifles in leather and gold, recently unwrapped from parcels, each "novelty" designed to save small discomforts, such as the lighting of a match or the turn of a head to see the time; she thought of Evan's sisters, giggling happily beneath banners that advertised Peace and Goodwill, and of Fisk at the other end of the Christmas dinner-table, gloomily contemplating his father's mésalliance, the Gainsboroughs' old cook who never could cook anything decently, and who had now become the last

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straw on all that an unjust government had heaped upon him at his birth. Teresa's mind, which had by now established David in its background as a referee in all debated questions, recalled at this moment her first visit to Aldwych and her self-reproach for having eaten the price of Albert Potter's splints. "I have been along that road," David had said, "and it leads nowhere except to a maze where you lose yourself and die for want of a new argument." "David!" she cried now, in her heart, "David! get me out of this and take me with you, if you know where you are going."

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CHAPTER XX

SUSIE, meanwhile, was performing prodigies of peace and goodwill at the Mary Popley Home. She radiated the most suitable atmosphere that a lady visitor to a rescue home could possibly have evolved after years of thought, and she did it without any thought at all! The "inmates," as they were called, and as we will call them for want of a less lively word, literally basked in her smile. Grave kindness they were accustomed to; breeziness they knew to satiety; Mrs. Abel's generous pity almost inconvenienced them; but Susie's veil of aloofness from everything real wrapped them in gossamer of the angels who have no bodies. "Isn't she a nice lady?" they said among themselves, feeling that, where she was, neither shame nor hope of doing well eventually, nor gratitude for tolerance would be expected of them. "It must be nice to be a lady and able to do what yer like without any 'arm coming of it," was what they mostly thought, in place of the bitter reflections that stung them in the presence of Mrs. Carpenter. "What does she know about it?" they were used to mutter, when that excellent visitor explained to them the duties of self-respect, the necessity for self-control, the joys of home that they had forfeited, and the useful-even-though-damaged lives they might yet lead. "That there Jack, I used to tell you about, would

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'ave taught 'er what for," was a favourite comment of one of them after these occasions. "Telling us as men is what we makes them, and 'adn't ought to be encouraged! 'E don't want much encouragin', she'd find, if she got 'im 'ome, in spite of 'er face." It seems almost a pity that this inmate could not have heard Susie second the vote of thanks to the committee at the Town Hall; for one feels that justice was hardly done to Mrs. Carpenter, while Susie, who had said the same thing in other words, was so much admired. But that, of course, was never known, and probably if it had been, her manner and her expression would have caused a different interpretation to be put upon her words. The inmates would have pictured themselves as partakers in a scene of innocent pleasure, ended in sorrow by the devil, while Mrs. Carpenter only succeeded in offending them by the suggestion of mischief done to an honest fellow.

"'Ain't she a nice lady!" they repeated in admiration. "I do like 'er 'at, and the way it is done at the back. Just pass my cup up along there, Veronica, would you?"

"Give old pasty-face something to do for 'er living," said Veronica, as she passed the cup up the line, to where the under-matron was presiding over the urns.

"You know, some of them are such nice girls," Mrs. Abel was saying enthusiastically to Susie at the same moment. "I can't tell you what splendid natures they have. That one down there—Veronica Baker—it's the saddest history, but I won't tell you now. She is simply devoted to the baby—such a darling it is—and I am hoping to get her a really

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good job where she can keep it with her. It is with her mother at present."

"I do hope the old woman is good to it," said Susie. "It would be terrible if anything happened to it while the mother is here. That is the worst of Homes I always think, although they are so necessary and splendid in every way. But so few of them are able to arrange to keep the mothers and children together, and it does separate them so in cases where it isn't possible. Don't you think there is that about them?"

"Yes, but then what can one do?" said Mrs. Abel a little sadly. "One can't leave them to go on with the life, and in many cases it is better that the child should be sent to some place that is known to be all right, so that the mother may not be hampered in finding work. It goes against them very much with some people if the child is seen."

"I do think," said Susie, "that if the girls could be got to see before they go so far what will happen if they do, it might prevent them. It seems to me sadder than any amount of difficulty in making ends meet."

"Yes, indeed, it does," said Mrs. Abel, greatly touched, poor little thing. "When I think of my own home and how difficult things are just now, and yet how we have been kept from all unhappiness, I think I hardly know how to be thankful enough."

"It must be so delightful to have your husband with you in everything," Susie said with a little sigh. "It must make up for any anxiety. If one is thoroughly understood nothing else matters. I was so glad you did so well with the sale of work

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in the summer. Drink is really another of the worst problems, I think. Do you find many in your Home are any better?"

"Well, it is impossible to say whether any of them are really cured," said Mrs. Abel. "But a great many have gone out and kept steady for several years, and now and then we hear from them that they are doing well. But of course some of them relapse and then they sometimes come back for a time. But if we get them quite early on I believe there is every chance of their keeping straight. Only it is so difficult to persuade them to come in then."

"What a pity it is that wine was ever invented," said Susie. "I can't think what people want with it. It only makes them noisy and stupid; not really cheerful."

"I don't think it is wine that matters," said Mrs. Abel. "In fact a little of it would do them good if they could get it. It is the beer and spirits that are so bad, because they take such quantities of beer and so little spirits affects them, especially the stuff they can afford. My husband doesn't at all believe in actual teetotalism, except as a help to those who can't keep away from it. The doctor says a glass of port would do him all the good in the world in the evening, but I can't get him to take it, just for the sake of the example."

"How splendid of him!" Susie exclaimed. "I wish I could persuade my husband to set the example to his men."

"You see, it is the evenings that are such a temptation," Mrs. Abel went on. "Their homes are so dreadfully uncomfortable, with the children

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all about and everything in a mess and nothing to do. Of course they prefer the public-houses and the clubs."

"But if the children went to bed in proper time and the wives kept their sewing until the evening it would be quite simple," Susie declared. "They seem to have no idea of time."

"Still, I know myself that it is not easy to have everything straight by the evening," Mrs. Abel sighed. "Now my little maid has gone and I have everything to do for the children, besides the house and the parish, I find it very difficult to be all neat and good tempered, and ready to listen to my husband, though I am longing to hear all about his day. And then, you see, very often with those people the children have nowhere to sleep except the living-room, and there is hardly room for them all to sit round—and perhaps no fire—and if there is illness—and they have no occupations to keep them quiet. And besides, some of the houses you really can't make clean or cheerful, and if the man does get good wages for a time it all goes as soon as there is unemployment or if he meets with an accident; the insurance doesn't cover it all. At least I know my husband will get his stipend whatever happens, and people are very kind and good. We were so touched by the amount of the Easter Offering this year, although it is such a poor parish."

"Mrs. Fulton, would you like to come and see the distribution of presents?" said the matron, advancing to Susie with a smile that she did her best to make genial. Long years of bringing the passions of other people into line had made it difficult for her to relax at different milestones of

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the Almanack into the requirements of a moral armistice.

Susie followed her into the next room, where a small Christmas tree was glimmering and dropping wax on to a table; round it, piled high, were parcels with the forbiddingly soft contours that betray to the experienced eye the presence of wool in unattractive shapes. Two smiling men with eye-glasses and gay waistcoats, and Mr. Abel, well-bred, shabby, harassed, devoted and obviously in need of port wine, stood by with sponges, ready to quench any untoward splutterings between the dim flames and the branches on which they drooped. Festoons of tinselled cotton hung between the pine needles which still smelled of the forest, and on the top spike, precariously inclined, was a cardboard Father Christmas with frosted boots and a face like Mr. Price after dinner. The inmates crowded round, murmuring among themselves in drawling exclamations peculiar to the class who spend so much of their lives as onlookers at all kinds of pageantry.

"Eh, luk!" they said. "H'm—yes, it is, i'nt it! eh, to be sure! See, Lily, the li'l moonkey wi' th' baal in its mouth! See Father Christmas? Where? Eh, yes, a see 'im. Seems a pity there a'nt no children here to see it. What's the good of it?" A terrific sniff raised the speaker's nose in wrinkles almost into her low-growing hair. "Eh, luk! the parcel! 'tis for the paarson!" Roars of laughter broke out while Mr. Abel unwrapped a neat silver cigar-cutter and sought in vain for words that should combine truth with the idea that it was the thing he was most in need of. Mrs. Abel received a pocket manicure case, the

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matron was delighted with Miss Gilworth's *Outlook of the Saints*, the under-matron had a sponge, "specially designed for continental use," and the rest of the staff were given various articles ranging from penwipers to plaster dogs with one eye bandaged. The proceedings ended with a carol, in which Susie joined with her very kindest expression and a most delicate voice, reinforced by the powerful bass of one of the gentlemen with eyeglasses who was a member of Mr. Abel's choir. Mr. Abel moved a vote of thanks in his high-pitched Oxford plaint; and soon after a piercing wind from the front door and a hum of voices and flutter of aprons in the passage betokened that the Mary Popley inmates would be left to their own reflections on a year that was about to slink away like a defaulter with the happiness they had invested.

Evangeline's daughter was born between Christmas and the New Year. Teresa arrived home late from her dinner at Mr. Manley's and was met by Strickland looking as if she were about to perform some religious rite. Her cap lay across her head at an angle that gave her a slightly mystic appearance, her eyes were full of indefinite purpose and her mouth was set tight.

"Have you got toothache again, you poor thing?" Teresa exclaimed the moment she saw her.

"No, Miss Teresa; it's *that*," Strickland replied in a hushed voice. "We've got the nurse, and the doctor is coming along now. Mrs. Fulton is upstairs, but I was to tell you there's nothing to worry about and you was to go into the General's study. I'll bring you a cup of tea and then you'll go to

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bed. It'll be all over in the morning, you'll see. You'll not hinder me by worrying, now, will you? For I've the kettles to see to and all."

"N—no," said Teresa rather doubtfully. "I won't hinder you anyhow, old lady. Go on with your fussing and don't mind me. But I wish you would come and tell me when it is there. I don't suppose I shall be asleep."

"Yes, you will, then, Miss Teresa, or I shall be angry. No, I mean it. You'll be doing very wrong if you're not asleep. The General is in the study, if you'll go up now, so I needn't keep up the drawing-room fire."

"Strickland—here a moment," said Teresa, pulling her into the darkened drawing-room. "Just tell me before you go. Is it very, very awful?"

"No, Miss Teresa, of course it isn't," she replied quite angrily, shaking herself away. "My brother's wife thinks nothing of it. It's what we've all got to go through—unless it's a poor thing like me that has no one. And there's the nurse and doctor and everything she can want. There's a great many that hasn't——"

"Oh, yes, yes, I know," Teresa interrupted. "I shall stop my ears if you say any more of that. I've finished with it. I'm not going to hear any more until I can begin again. Strickland, I'm engaged; but please don't tell them downstairs. I want to do it myself when it is all over. Only I am so happy I had to tell you; and now I have come home to be so frightened. Never mind; you see, I am not in the least worried. I'm going up. And about twelve o'clock I shall go to my room—and take off all my clothes—and go to bed—and

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put my head on the pillow—Oh, Strickland, you are an ass, aren't you? How do you suppose I am going to sleep? Well, good-night." She ran upstairs very quietly and went into the study.

Cyril was sitting by the fire, smoking and reading. He looked round as she came in and said, "Well, did you have a good time? I suppose they've told you about Chips?"

"Yes," she said. "I shan't go to bed yet if you are not going. We'll wait together if you like. And, Father—I saw David." She brought a chair up to the fire.

"And did he see you?" Cyril inquired. "You please my eye very much when you are happy and you've been a withered little object lately."

"Well, that is really about all about it," she said. "I've stopped withering. You do like David, don't you, Father?"

"I'm devoted to him," Cyril answered. "Do I understand that you have fixed it up?"

"Yes," she answered. "Oh, Father, listen, what was that?"

"I didn't hear anything," he said, rather hastily, "but there's a devil of a draught up those back stairs. I think I'll shut the passage door."

"I'll do it," she said.

"No, stay where you are." He went out, shutting the door after him, shut the passage door that led to the top storey and met Strickland coming up. "Keep that door shut, would you?" he said. "Miss Teresa's in there; and don't worry her to go to bed. I'll send her when I think it is a good plan." He went back to the study.

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"Was that Strickland you were talking to?" she asked. "There's nothing wrong, is there?"

"No, but I can't do with her damned singing. I told her to wait until the Philharmonic was open. Now then, tell us all about it, Dicky; that is, as much of it as you like."

"Well, you see, I refused him before," she began slowly. "He wouldn't combine with what I was doing and I wouldn't give it up——" She stopped, and Cyril poured himself out a glass of whiskey. "Have some?" he asked.

"Now you know, dear, that is silly," said Teresa. "I don't want to take to drink because I am going to be married—— Oh, father, what is that? Something is bothering me—is there a wind or something? It was quite still when I came back."

Cyril hesitated a moment and then said, "You're not the woman your mother is. She thought me very foolish—I am not sure she didn't say very wrong—for spending the night in the Turkish bath when you were born. I should be there now if you weren't at home, but if you are going to sit there behaving like some damned fox-terrier whenever a door opens I shall have to get out the car and drive you round till we both freeze."

"All right," she said. "I am sorry, but I didn't know what it was. I just felt creepy."

They heard the front door slam.

"That's the doctor," said Cyril. "Now you can go ahead. The pilot is on board and a tot of rum will be served to all those in favour. I wish you would have some."

"No, I am going to have tea presently," she said.

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"I do wish you wouldn't interrupt. I was going to tell you why I changed my mind."

"Yes?" he said, encouragingly.

"Let's see. You see, the thing is like this. I think David started with the same idea that I did and I don't know exactly what happened but he found that he hadn't enough brains for argument, so he studied fox-hunting which he had always had a passion for, only he got slightly mixed like I did about people who live in towns. He is really very sensitive about cruelty, and his father gave him such a lot of money at college that when he found anyone who wanted it he gave like anything; and when you have once begun doing that in person, not just by subscription, it is very difficult not to feel that you ought to be earning some instead. But anyhow that is what he did. And then he had to go to Aldwych to help his father who wasn't well, and then he got interested in the land and he met some people who wanted experiments done—I forget what in—and who couldn't afford to do them; and, it is very odd, but he seems to find out more by common sense than I ever should by working and working at an idea, trying to make it fit whatever happens, because it never does. As soon as one stops worrying and works at whatever one can do best, the idea one had tried to fit on to all sorts of contradictions seems suddenly to grow up out of the middle of one's work, with a root fastened to all the different things it wouldn't fit before. It is impossible to explain but I assure you you would have found that happen if you had ever had an idea of any sort or done any work."

"I should like to direct your next piece of pur-

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poseless labour to respecting the forces of the Crown a little if you can," said Cyril. "I'm damned! No ideas and no work! Do you know who I am? I suppose your mother is right. Marriage does mean something to a girl."

"Why? What?" she asked in bewilderment. "What have I said?"

"Go on, my love; don't let me interrupt you," he said. Strickland came in with some tea and a plate of sandwiches. "I suppose it is no good offering you tea, sir?" she inquired.

"No, thank you, I have got everything I want," he answered.

"I am coming to bed in a few minutes," Teresa said, nodding to her.

Strickland looked appealingly at Cyril and hesitated. "You'd better stay here a bit I think," he said. "You won't sleep after that stuff."

"Oh yes, I shall. I'm awfully sleepy," she said.

Strickland pulled herself together and cleared her throat. "I'm sorry, Miss Teresa," she said boldly, "but there's been a slight accident in your room. Your hot water bottle leaked, and the bed was wet through so I've taken the things down to the fire. I'll tell you as soon as they are dry."

"Very well; but goodness, how late it is!" Teresa said as she glanced at the clock. "Nearly one. Has mother gone to bed?"

"Not yet," said Strickland. "She'll be down by-and-by. You'll see her if you wait a little." She shut the door and Teresa settled herself again in the armchair with her tea. "The Prices have got Aldwych for another six months," she said, "but David thought perhaps if we were married in the

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spring I might go out with him to see his place over there and help him to settle up, and then come back when they leave. I shouldn't so much mind leaving all of it if I didn't go straight from Emma's office to a house with hot towel rails and pheasant for breakfast and a peach house."

"Well, we all have our troubles, but I feel if I were given my choice that that is the one I could face with most courage," said Cyril. "I could tear myself away from Emma's office more resolutely than from almost any luxury I know. But then I can't live up to your friend Mrs. Vachell, who hunts with George Washington and runs with Ananias from a sense of duty. I admit I wasn't happy in the office when you took me there."

"What are we going to do with Chips when she gets well?" said Teresa. "I can't bear to go away and leave her here. Mrs. Vachell would get her altogether in time and mother wouldn't be any good. Mother thinks that when she says what fine creatures women are and all that, and when Mrs. Vachell begins on the same subject, they both mean the same thing. But they don't. Did you know that? Mrs. Vachell is quite serious."

"Yes, I knew that," he answered. "She told me herself that nothing was too bad to do in the cause of the noblest of God's creatures, and a woman in that frame of mind is always beyond a joke. You can't get it into their heads that there are certain things that are not done, such as vitriol and so on. Not that I have heard of any of them doing that, but she seemed to be speaking inclusively."

"No, that sort of thing isn't a bit like her. Really father, it isn't. I only meant that the more de-

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pressed Chips gets about being away from Evan the more Mrs. Vachell uses it to make it impossible for her ever to go back. Chips is quite right in saying that she can't live here. It would be so dreary for her and she hates having no explanation for it. People will think that either she or Evan have done something bad. And it is cruel to think of her without a man for the rest of her life; it is far worse than being a widow. I don't think either you or mother have realised that."

"It hadn't, as you say, occurred to me that they wouldn't finish it up sometime. I hope marriage doesn't mean too much to her after all. I have always supposed that so long as people mind their own business there is very little to complain of."

As he stopped speaking, a long, high-pitched sound, seeming to come from nowhere in particular and too faint to be more than just audible, rose, grew and died away again. Teresa turned white and looked at her father with frightened, questioning eyes."

"Was it a lie that Strickland told me about my hot bottle?" she asked. "Didn't she want me to go up?"

"I expect not," said Cyril. "You can't do anything. Would you like me to get the car out? We can wrap up quite warm."

"No, what is the good of running away," she answered. "I have got to know. But Strickland said it was nothing. She was quite indignant and was going to tell me that there are people who aren't as well looked after as Chips, but I wouldn't listen. Let's go on talking. I do so want to get out of this mess of pity on to a road that leads

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somewhere. It is like being for ever shot at and hurt by something you can't see. Strickland is wrong. Evidently in the main things one person suffers as much as another."

"I've often told you you were worrying unnecessarily," said Cyril. "I am sorry we didn't send you away just now, but I never thought of it and your mother doesn't descend to details much, as you know. She takes the most alarming things as a matter of course. I believe she was born a favourite of the gods. I found out the other day that she has never had a tooth out. I was away when Chips was born and, as I told you, I spent the night of your arrival in the Turkish bath, so I don't know what happened; but it wouldn't surprise me in the least to hear she slept through it."

The door opened and Susie came in. As she stood there for a moment a smell unknown to Teresa came in with the air from the passage.

"What! are you two still here?" she said in the gently reproving tone she used when any of them did anything not wholly normal. "Why didn't you go to bed, Teresa dear? I told Strickland to tell you not to worry. I hope you weren't."

"Oh no," she replied, "it wasn't that. I got your message, but I'm not sleepy. What is that odd smell?"

"Just a little something the doctor used to give her some sleep," said Susie. "I think I shall wait here until he comes down." She had left the door open and Teresa sat tense and agonised, dreading the sound that might come again at any moment. But everything was quiet. Strickland shuffled down the back stairs and shut the kitchen door. Cyril

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got up and shut the door of the study and drew up another chair.

"Well, and how did your dinner go off?" Susie asked. "Did you see David?"

"Yes," said Teresa. "He—he enjoyed himself very much in the Argentine."

"How nice. And is he going back or is he going to take up Aldwych again? I do hope he will."

"Yes," she said still more nervously. "Yes—we are going to take it up together—we arranged—I hope you don't mind. I got a little worried with Chips and everything, or I should have told you. I really came home to tell you—I——"

"My darling, I quite understand," said Susie. "Don't trouble to explain. I am so glad that you have come to see what a dear fellow he is. I always told you he was a great deal nicer than you thought; but you wouldn't believe me."

Teresa's just feeling of indignation gave way to a second thought that she had much rather her mother supposed her not to have cared for David before, than that she should suspect her of having listened to wisdom on the subject of a prudent marriage.

"And so that is all settled!" Susie continued, warming her toes peacefully. "And when dear Evangeline is strong again we must make another effort to put that right. And then we shall have nothing left to wish for, shall we? Evan is a silly fellow, really. I wish he were here now; it might bring it home to him."

"How, Mother?"

"I mean that he might see that women have quite enough to go through without being teased about their children when they have got them. All those

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stupid rules and that kind of thing! Really, you know, I think that anyone who has had a child—I mean any woman, of course,—deserves to be let alone. Now those poor women I saw last week——. I don't know that it is a very nice subject for you, Teresa, but as you have taken to work among the poor you are bound to hear of it, and you are going to be married yourself—what I was going to say is that those poor women I saw at Christmas have been most foolish, there is no doubt, and the law ought to oblige the men to marry them. But if it won't do that, at least it might be made more easy for the mother to keep the child with her instead of her living alone with that matron, who I am sure, is extremely kind, but with such a cross face. The poor little child has to be brought up elsewhere because the mother has lost her character! Men lose their characters quickly enough in the public-house, and no one says anything. They are allowed to take the bottle home with them, too, and it is not thought a disgrace, although they do it deliberately. Whereas a child——" She paused, becoming suddenly aware that Cyril's eye was fixed on her with delighted interest. "Cyril, dear," she said, "are you sure you want to wait up? There is really no need."

"I wouldn't miss a word, Sue, I assure you," he said politely. "Dicky, pass me the syphon, would you?" Teresa passed it, and said nothing. No one spoke for a short time, and then a bell rang upstairs and another sound, a sort of rapid, angry mewing, was heard as Susie opened the door of the study and Strickland vanished up the stairs. Susie disappeared into the passage and presently Strick-

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land ran down again. "It's a dear little girl, sir, the doctor says," she remarked, thrusting her head round the study door, "and now you get to bed, Miss Teresa, please, while I get a cup of something for the nurse. The doctor will be pleased to join you, sir, presently, but he won't stop to have nothing but a glass of wine and a biscuit. He's got another case waiting for him he says." She disappeared before Teresa had grasped the wonderful details of her déshabille. This was indeed a new Strickland, or at least one unknown to the family. "My brother's wife" and Evangeline were one and indivisible in Strickland's heart that night.

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CHAPTER XXI

LADY VARENS and David stayed for some weeks with Mr. Manley, and then took a furnished cottage by the sea, at a place not far from Millport. It was a place of everlasting winds, sandy as the desert, flat as a tablecloth, ugly as every other nest of the speculative builder. It is true that the owners of the land had imposed restrictions on the invaders, but the only result of this was to make a certain style of architecture a duty, instead of an unfortunate occurrence, so the town had as little chance of achieving beauty as a society for the suppression of marriage would have of evolving true love. The little caskets of the home, that were dumped down in groups along the shore, roofed to excess in the prevailing fashion, neatly gardened with rock plants that could not blow away and might be disinterred from an avalanche of sand without obvious damage, were designed to catch the greatest possible quantity of ozone. Painstaking mothers, whose husbands were occupied in Millport, immured themselves heroically there all the year round for the good of their offspring, who rewarded them by thriving exceedingly on the hurricanes of health that swept along the mud flats. The tide rose from time to time—generally in the night—, took a rapid survey of the villas, and fled back into the distant sea. Squadrons of perambulators were marched daily

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along the most exposed part of the shore, which the speculative builder had kindly laid with asphalt for the purpose. There, prevented by stout iron railings from being blown into the sea, the mothers and sisters and aunts and nurses of young Millport wrestled up and down twice a day, their skirts lashed impedingly against their knees or their calves, according to whether they were going to or coming from, the butcher. Their faces were set with a permanent expression of having been blown crooked, nose slightly aslant and a little richer in tone on one side than the other, eyes half closed to keep out the volleying sand, ears all but inside out, and the mouth set at the gasp, owing to the nostrils having been banged to as soon as the owner struggled out of her front door; heads were mostly a little on one side, cocked to meet the shouts of a succession of acquaintances all endeavouring to hear whether Reggie would come to tea with Edna on Thursday or Friday, or whether the bridge party began at three or four. But then, as the inhabitants say when strangers are critical about the place, "we do have such beautiful sunsets. They say it is something phosphorescent about the mud." So there's always something either way to keep the balance between good and evil.

Lady Varens took one of the villas for a few months. The place more nearly resembled country than any other in the neighbourhood where she could get a house; it was at least in the open air, or rather, as she said, in an open draught, and the mud stayed where it was, instead of going up into the sky and down again all the time. The sun shone a little when it was anywhere handy, and one could

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smell the sea, and even see it for a few minutes if one looked sharp about it. There was a golf course, and a train to bring Teresa and anyone else who had sufficient patience and a solid enough frame to hold together during the requisite period. Maids were found who, being attached by love to the butcher's assistants, were willing to oblige a titled lady to whom money was no object. The villa was designed for a large family and attendants, so when Evangeline was well again, Lady Varens asked her to stay for a time with the children; she persuaded her that it would be good for them to be blown into the state of solidity that comes to the young of that scourging place from constant tossing between the consuming ozone and the replenishing butcher. Evangeline accepted, and at the end of a week or two the shadow of Millport and all the human vexatiousness which had darkened the last months for her began to stir and rise, taking with it her newspaper problems, Mrs. Vachell's sphinxery and the episodes of her life at Drage that were stored in her recollection like toys broken in a long-forgotten quarrel. The dear inanities of that time were like poor Tweedledum and Tweedledee's nice new rattle which had brought them both out armed with deceptions against each other, till the monstrous crow they had brought down frightened them apart. She laughed aloud one day as she thought of Teresa's comparison, and presently she went to the nursery and brought Ivor's copy of "Through the Looking Glass" into the drawing-room and sat down with it in the window seat, where she used to watch the sunsets. She turned up the part where the quarrel begins about nothing, when Tweedledum and

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Tweedledee have been sitting together under an umbrella. "That is exactly like us," she thought and she laughed as she read. "But Evan will never see that. I shall have to explain the situation in some other way." Her thoughts wandered back down a train of other things that she had tried to explain to him. Before their engagement she had expounded a good deal and listened very little. To tell the truth, Evan had been attending more to the distraction of her presence than to the matter of her speech, but she did not know that. He had been unaccustomed to the society of women who lulled, and she did lull his natural embarrassment in conversation by the largeness of her interest in everything that went on in the world. Such luxuriant living and lack of analysis was new to him. He had formed an idea of women from his sisters' giggling little comments on every subject; they inspected life at too close quarters to make their view interesting to anyone with Evan's passion for Universal study. The world was contained for them in their village interests; England was a garden where God lived and their village was one of His boundary lodges; foreign countries were something akin to a nobleman's other residences, managed by agents and let to strangers; the mission field a wild region that must be brought into cultivation. Evan had loved his sisters while the war was on, for they thought neither to the right hand nor to the left. They had trotted out of their village in the wake of England, Harry and St. George, never doubting that God was with them as they bandaged and stitched and prayed that Ypres might hold out, and that Evan and the men from the village might come home safe.

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They never spoke of the enemy as sheep or devils. War was a medicine which England had to take now and then for the good of her health, and whether it was against Zulus, Boers, or Germans had nothing whatever to do with the village. *The Graphic* of the past or *The Graphic* of the present, depicted "the dead," with troops advancing over them through smoke, and dropping as they came; or a hillock and a gun and a few figures lying bandaged—perhaps with the very bandages that Emily had made—and that was Victory, and would end someday in "The Soldier's Return," and a dinner in the village. Such a dinner! The sisters were at their best at such times; no one could be cross with them; but in private life, during peace, Evan found them trying beyond words. He was suffering from reaction against their village interests when he met Evangeline, and listened to her impersonal prattle of sunshine and wide spaces of the earth where parties are unknown and no man is obliged to ask the nymph of his choice how many theatres she has been to. Then, as we know, Evangeline encouraged him. She wouldn't let him keep himself to himself as he had always done. She forced him, in the name of politeness to his General's daughter, to say something, and it had to be something true. She refused all substitutes for his treasures; so he brought them out one at a time, and she handled them so respectfully, owing to a "gentleman's" instinct, which was part of her inheritance from Cyril, that in the end he married her; married her, poor dear, supposing her to be what he called a lady. Then after a time they began to quarrel. He said his nice new rattle was spoiled, his lady was not lady-

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like. She always behaved "like a gentleman" towards him, but that wasn't right; she must behave like a lady. Then Evangeline said that she had done nothing to the rattle. It was just as it was when he first got it. So he pointed to Mrs. Vachell and said that was what he wanted his rattle to look like, a ladylike woman who could understand a man's idea of the way he wanted his sons brought up. They fought battles and separated in fear of the darkness that came down over everything after that and now——. "Really, really," she thought, "it is too silly for anything. He knows by now that Mrs. Vachell was having him on and never cared twopence for what he said. If he could know that I love him he might see that his rattle isn't broken at all. After all, we were happy—. Ivor doesn't seem to mind very much whether he is approved of or not. Evan wouldn't find his 'moulding' made much difference in a year or two's time, and Father says Ivor is all right; he is not afraid of things and tells the truth; and perhaps Evan might let him alone if he came back now. What a good thing Susan is a girl. I don't think he would be so keen about bringing her up to be ladylike after coming such a cropper. Oh, dear! I do wish we could begin all over again." She remembered the daily event of Evan's home-coming when they were at Drage; the pleasure of his being in to lunch unexpectedly; his atrocious singing while he had a hot bath; the general disturbance in every room; the comfortable, foolish conversations; the friendly disputes and dear kisses; one or two tiresome occurrences, as when there was a drunken cook to be dealt with and

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people coming to dinner and Evan was so decent and helpful. Then a happy, out-of-door summer, and later on their eagerness about Ivor. After that, Evan began to shun the nursery foolishness and she had got bored by his details of tinkering with the little car he bought. They had gone to Millport one Christmas and Ivor had screamed a good deal, and the nurse complained. There were no complaints now. Everything went like clockwork, and life was dull as ditchwater with no man to promote irrationality by treating all episodes with common sense. No household can be really merry without someone to supply the spectacle of common sense, meeting with little accidents from the mischievous contradictions of the human heart. Presently David came in.

"You can't see to read there, can you?" he said.

"I wasn't reading," she answered. "I was wondering. I must do something about Evan, do you know? It isn't really a quarrel if you come to think of it."

David looked at her inquiringly, and sat down on the window seat. "I wonder what I had better do. Go out to him, or what?"

"The children would be all right with us here, but I suppose you would want them," he said. "Your husband has never thought of leaving the army, has he? He could get something to do in England that would probably pay him better."

"What sort of thing?" she asked.

"I don't know, but I could find out. I know some engineering people."

Evangeline was silent. "I haven't the least

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idea when it began," she said, after a few minutes thought.

"Have you tried writing to him?" he suggested

"No, not yet."

"Does he know about Susan?"

"Dicky wrote," said Evangeline.

"There is no difficulty in getting out of the army," he remarked.

"But how am I to put that? What shall I say?"

"Just tell him," said David; "there's no difficulty in that."

"Oh, David!" said Evangeline in despair, "don't go on saying there's no difficulty in anything. I daresay there isn't if you can do the things, but just think of it! He went away in the blackest huff you ever saw, and all about nothing, so there is, in a way, nothing to begin on. I can't say, 'Are you still angry?' because he must be, or he would have written. I can't say, 'I am not angry any more,' because I wasn't. I was depressed and frightened to death."

David sat with his hands in his pockets, slowly swinging his legs and gazing at the floor, wrapped in thought. "I don't think I should think at all," he advised. "I should just take a pen and write."

"Would you take a J pen or a quill pen?" Evangeline inquired, while she tossed the volume of "Alice" backwards and forwards.

"Either," he replied. "There's no difficulty in that." She all but threw the book at his head, but refrained. "No difficulty at all," he repeated, with his eye on the book.

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"Can I say you thought he could get a job in England?" she said.

"Yes, if you like."

"But do you think I had better?"

"I shouldn't begin with it," said David.

"But you think I might put it in at the end?"

"I should see how the letter looks when it is done. If it seems to fit, put that in."

"I suppose you are doing your best to be helpful."

"I'd do anything I could for you."

"But you don't know how frightening he is when he just turns his back. Suppose he says, 'No'."

"Then you might have to go out there."

"What! and just walk up to him?"

"Yes, or else wait till he came in."

"And what should I say?"

"You'd have to tell him you had come."

"I see."

"I am going to see where Dicky is," he said, getting off the window seat. "I really came in to look for her. You had better have a light." He brought a small lamp over from the writing-table and fastened it to a switch beside her. Then he got a blotting book and some paper and envelopes and took a fountain pen from his pocket. "That will write, you'll find," he said, as he laid the things by her and then he went out.

She took up the paper and turned it over; paused, and took up the pen. It was rather like the preliminaries to a letter written by planchette, when the fingers are loose upon the board and the eye fixed on vacancy. Presently she began and wrote a few words rapidly, stopped, wrote again, and this time she was off. She filled the four sides of the

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paper with what she wrote, and then folded it, screwing up her eyes resolutely. "I daren't read it," she said to herself, and pushed it, with shaking fingers, into the envelope, stuck it down and addressed it. Then she went into the hall and opened a cupboard, groped in the dark for a coat, and took the first she touched, which happened to be David's. She slipped her arms into it, and without stopping for fastenings, wrapped it round her and opened the outer door. The pillar box was about twenty yards away and the letter was posted before anything but the speed of her actions had time to guide her thoughts. When it was done she felt as if she had given the world a kick and sent a villa or two toppling about her ears. "Oh!——" she thought, and "Oh——! suppose it doesn't work!" She ran back into the house and flung David's coat upon a seat without thinking. Then she went to the drawing-room and drew the curtains and sat down by the fire. "Suppose I should have to go out," she thought. "Suppose he wouldn't look at me. Suppose he doesn't care for old times after all." She was still sitting there when Lady Varens came in. "I thought there was no wind this afternoon," she remarked, "but there is something; I think it must be suction, because there is not a twig stirring, but my hat was drawn off my head and my eyes are full of sand. Have you been out?"

"Only to the letter box," said Evangeline. "I wrote to Evan and raced out to post it before I had time to think."

"What made you do that?" Lady Varens asked.

"David," she answered. "He kept repeating that there was no difficulty. If anyone goes on

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saying a thing often enough I begin to believe it, and he went on and on."

"But I don't understand yet," Lady Varens said. "What sort of a letter was it?"

"Just a nice letter. There are a great many things that he may have forgotten. I haven't. It was all right, you know, once."

"David thinks Evan might leave the army," she went on presently. "I shouldn't have to go out then—unless he won't answer."

"What would he do if he left?" asked Lady Varens.

"I don't know, but David seemed to have some idea in his mind."

"Then I expect if he seemed to, he had. If he goes after a fox there generally is one."

. . . . .

The post to Egypt is not a very long one, but measured by the emotions Evangeline went through between the earliest day when Evan's answer could be expected, and the day when it came, the interval was about a year and a half. The extra length of time was put in three strips. One between the moment when the postman knocked at the front door and the time it took the maid to examine and bring up the letters. The second was when Evangeline was out in the afternoon and remembered that another post would be there when she got back; it took the length of several days to look at the letters on the hall table as she crossed the threshold and judge from their appearance whether they were all circulars. The third age was when she and Teresa were talking in their bedrooms before going to bed and went through their nightly review of all the

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things he would be likely to say, and compared them with the likelihood of his saying nothing at all. The nights were all right, for Evangeline, when in health, would sleep though the earth cracked asunder. One day people came to lunch and stayed talking, so she did not go out, and the maid brought the letters to Lady Varens before anyone had remembered the postman.

"Here's yours, Evangeline," Lady Varens said, passing it to her. "Do you know whether the children have gone out yet? I wanted them to call at the butcher's for me. He didn't send the mutton I ordered this morning."

"I'll go and see," said Evangeline, and she carried off her letter. Ten minutes or a quarter-of-an-hour went by, and then Ivor came in dressed for going out.

"Mother's being a dog on the stairth," he said. "It's dangerous; you'd better not go past, but we're going to do your message now if Nurth can get past."

"Can't you say your s's yet, darling?" said the visitor. "Well, I'm quite shocked! Come and tell me where you are going."

"Can't thtop," said Ivor. "You oughtn't to path remarkth. Good-bye."

He went out, leaving the door open, and Teresa got up and shut it. She heard cacklings from the baby and Ivor and respectful protests from the nurse near the top landing. "Now go off," she heard Evangeline say in a tone she had nearly forgotten. "I don't know where the dog has gone; probably to the butcher's. You may find him there." Teresa shut the door behind her. "Chips!" she called

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gently, "shall I come up or are you coming down?"

"I don't know what I am going to do," said a dishevelled head through the banisters. "What about those people? 'Massacre them all!' as the Peace Delegate said." Nurse, carrying the baby, brushed past with an apology, and went down, herding Ivor before her.

"It is quite all right," said Evangeline. "Very much all right. Excessively all right." Teresa sat down on a lower step.

"David is clever, isn't he?" she remarked with pleasure.

"I thought of it first," said Evangeline. "He only suggested writing."

"Well what is going to happen? Are you going out or what?"

"No, he says Joseph Price offered him a job in their works when the regiment was sent out, but he refused. If he can still get it he will clear out."

"Why did he refuse it before?" asked Teresa.

"Because of Ivor I think—but we won't go into that."

"Where is the Price place? Would you have to be in Millport?"

"No, it is a new one they have started somewhere near London. I forget what the name is; it is somewhere I never heard of except that I know some famous person was born there."

"Hush!" said Teresa. "They're coming out. Let me up, quick!" They both disappeared into Evangeline's room as the drawing-room door opened.

"Yes, he's a thoroughly decent f'ller," said

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Joseph Price to his father, that evening. "Marv'llous engineer, I'm told. But 'f course, it's just 's you like."

"What does he want to leave the army for?" inquired Mr. Price suspiciously. "Nothing fishy about it, I suppose? The army's a very good profession for a man that has got up in it."

"'T's not lucrative, very," observed Joseph, "nor int'resting exactly, I should think. And Egypt's a tedious sort of place; nothing t' do except learn about it and so on; th' sort of thing Vachell's good at. You know, so far as Hatton's concerned I c'n understand a man pr'ferring to use his intell'gence in the panoply of war, rather than th' executive; specially if there's nothing t' execute, if you see what I mean. And, aft'r all, the sort of thing he'd be doing f'r us might be useful in all sorts of ways in 'nother war. There's no earthly reason, if you come t' think of it, why he shouldn't join up again 'n that case and take th' thing up where he left it."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Price, "but that's not the point. What I want to find out is, has he any business capacity apart from this talent?"

"'Mense capacity, I b'lieve," said Joseph. "It's his strong point."

"How do you know? What experience have you of him?"

"When I was at Drage the f'llers talked of nothing else. He was the very man that ought to have taken over your plant then."

"But surely he was in France at that time," said the perplexed parent.

"Yes, I know, but everyone was going backwards

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and forwards all th' time, and they all knew what th' others were doing. There was a story about him, I r'member——"

"Well?" said Mr. Price, as his son stopped.

"No, you must get him t' tell it you himself; I might spoil it. But kait sairysly, Dad, he's the very f'ller you're looking for."

"Why are you so keen about this?" asked Mr. Price, frowning to himself. "You're not after the wife, are you, eh?"

"No, my dear dirty old man, I'm not, and you mustn't say that kind 'f thing now; 't's not done."

"I don't see why not," his father remarked. "There's nothing to be ashamed of. I remember a time when a lot of jobs were handled that way, but people are mealy-mouthed now. Well, write and say we'll try him, if you like."

"I've his letter 'f acceptance here, as a matt'r of fact," said Joseph. "Subject, of course, t' your approval. I sounded him more 'r less befur he went away, but it didn't appeal t' him then. However, Egypt's kait 'mpossible they tell me, f'r a young family; flies get int' the milk, 'n' so on. I'll fix it up with him for you, 'f you like. By th' bye, when exactly d' we clear out 'f here?"

"In June," replied his father. "It's a great disappointment to me, the whole thing. I had thought of settling down here and leaving you with a decent place to call your own. However, there are plenty more in the market. I shouldn't be surprised if Brackenbury didn't come up for sale some time, and of course this doesn't hold a candle to it."

"If you're thinking of me, I'd leave it," said

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Joseph. "You know, the thing's hardly done 't all now. You won't find any decent f'llers left in houses like this in a year or two, I b'lieve. Nobody's got 'ny money, except a few people like you, and you might b' left stranded here with practic'lly no one to talk to. Personally, I should say th' thing to do is to live 's quietly and comf'rtably as possible, and say we've lost th' money. You'd find yourself in a far better set t'-morrow."

"Tut! nonsense!" said his father."

"'T's true, I 'ssure you. I've been sairysly c'nsidering putting in a couple 'f hours a day at the 'lectric light plant at Brackenbury. Th' Duke's fairf'lly keen on getting his daughters off, and they won't look 't anybody 'nless he's a mechanic 'r dustman or that kind 'f thing. Two 'f them are starting 'n old-fashioned inn and calling it 'Th' Star 'nd Garter.' They want t' have th' old f'ller's trophies framed t' stick up outside. 'T's an awf'lly jolly little idea 'f you come t' think of it."

We will here leave Mr. Price to his reflections.

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CHAPTER XXII

"WELL now, tell me," said Mrs. Carpenter, drawing her chair near to Mrs. Vachell's tea-table. "What is all this about the Hattons, do you know?"

"I haven't heard anything," said Mrs. Vachell. "What have they, or rather, what has she, been doing?"

"Haven't you heard that he is coming home?"

"Let me see, where was it he went to? Egypt, wasn't it? I haven't seen Evangeline for some time."

"Amy," Mrs. Carpenter said earnestly, wedging her large face close up to Mrs. Vachell, "tell me now—you know I never repeat things—what did happen then? You know people say all sorts of things, and some of them have really said so much about you that I want to be able to contradict them."

"You can contradict them all, certainly," said Mrs. Vachell.

"I may do that from you, may I?"

"No, not from me, from yourself. I don't know what they have said, but whatever it is, I am sure you can safely say it is untrue."

"You really had nothing to do with his going to Egypt? I was told to-day, on the very best authority, that you had sent him off because Evangeline—you know those young wives—they can't bear

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anyone even to look at their husbands, can they? Do you know, I thought she was quite strange in her manner one evening at our house when he would talk to me all the time about India. We said something about the heat, and I remember I thought to myself, 'Yes, my dear boy, you would find it very hot indeed out there with a wife who looks after you with those eyes!' Why, half the women at any station would run after him on purpose, if they saw she was jealous."

"Yes,—women!" said Mrs. Vachell. "How these Christians love one another, don't they? We are a very united sex when we are running with the hounds to show what the hare can do to please them."

"Then it really wasn't you who made him go to Egypt?" Mrs. Carpenter persisted.

"No. I am very much flattered at being mistaken for the War Office, but it wasn't me. I should like to take the credit for ridding the country of the dullest regiment in England, but I am afraid I can't truthfully."

"That is very sarcastic of you, dear Amy, but I know you don't like soldiers," said Mrs. Carpenter affectionately. "You have never mixed with them enough to know how honest and simple they are. What do you think of General Fulton, though, really and truly? He is an odd sort of man, isn't he? I get on with him very well because I love his humour and we have great arguments together, but I know he is not popular as a rule. He is very naughty in the things he says to her sometimes, and she never seems to see. Emmie Trotter doesn't like her at all; she thinks she is not genuine, but

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I don't think that. I think she is perfectly sincere in the work she does but I don't think she is business-like. Someone told me that Evan Hatton is coming back and going into business. Had you heard of it?"

"Yes, I had heard that," said Mrs. Vachell. "And Teresa has given up her work with Emma and is going to study unemployment from the most favourable standpoint, by having nothing to do. She is very lucky, I think, though I couldn't do it myself."

"You mean you don't care for the Varens'?"

"I know nothing about them one way or the other. He used to be in and out of the University, I don't know what for; learning to make chemical manures perhaps; but I never saw much of him. He belongs to what Mrs. Harding calls the 'polo set' and they don't interest me."

"Oh, now, some of them are very charming and delightful. All the Brackenbury set are dears. Bobo, as they call him, is a splendid player and a real dear boy. However, the Duke says he can't afford to let him play next year and he must do something. You have heard about the girls setting up an inn, haven't you? It is a pity, I think, but as Bobo says, what are you to do? He pretends he is going to run a circus, but seriously, I'm sure I don't know. They can't keep themselves in the army now, not even in the Guards. But David Varens—how did we get off the track——? He is all right, apparently. His father seems to have left him plenty of money, and of course he is not extravagant like Bobo and that terrible elder brother. Wasn't it dreadful about him! Did you say Teresa

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is going to give up all her work as soon as she marries? Now I do think that is a great mistake, don't you? All the more reason she should go on with it now that she will have money. Of course I can see that she couldn't come in every day in the same way, but there is no reason why she shouldn't visit and take an interest in it all. A few meetings would be good for her and prevent her from getting self-centred."

The door opened and Mr. Vachell was heard to say, "Come in. I think my wife is in here," and Teresa walked into the room, followed by the little man with a pile of books. "I was bringing these back," she said to Mrs. Vachell. "They are some that you lent to Evangeline and she had forgotten about them. I am so sorry. I met Mr. Vachell on the step and he brought me up, but I am afraid I mustn't stay."

"Yes, you must," said Mrs. Vachell. "I haven't seen any of you for so long and Mrs. Carpenter was saying just now that I am given credit for all sorts of things in your family—for Captain Hatton's regiment being sent to Egypt and—what else was it, Mrs. Carpenter? I have just told her that I never see you, but she is still suspicious."

Teresa frowned and blushed and had nothing to say for a minute. Then she turned on Mrs. Carpenter in sudden wrath. "I do wish women wouldn't be sweet when they want to make mischief," she said. "I never knew anything like this place. It is like a lot of flies walking in muck and then settling on the jam." The expression on Mrs. Carpenter's face moved her to compunction, and she stopped. After all, the woman had had children and battled

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with pain and death and denied herself for her fellow-creatures in more ways than Teresa, for she had no love of them to carry her over the discomforts of bearing other people's burdens. If she did gossip and preach and plume herself by the way, she was entitled to that relaxation, knowing no other. So long as Britons never shall be slaves let us allow the Potters their public-house, the Carpenters their tea-table, the Fisks their blood and the passionate philanthropists their feast of reason and flow of soul. The Emma Gainsboroughs will go on patiently and methodically clearing up, taking no notice of themselves, and by-and-bye, as Susie so often justly remarked, "Anything that is really good is sure to make the rest seem so small in comparison."

"What was it you wanted to know?" she asked Mrs. Carpenter gently. "I would so much rather tell you, if you are interested, than have you going about asking all sorts of people whether they have heard anything."

"Dear little Teresa!" Mrs. Carpenter said, recovering her usual smile. "What a set-down for poor me! You fierce little thing! Well then, since you ask, tell me what Evangeline has been doing to set all the tongues wagging? I shouldn't have liked to ask you, dear, until you offered me your confidence so sweetly. I appreciate it, I assure you. But you know it is distressing to hear a thing hinted at everywhere and not to be able to put it right authoritatively. Now we will have it all fair and square, shall we? Sit down there and tell me—— have they separated?"

"No, they haven't," said Teresa. "Mrs. Vachell

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lent Evangeline those books that I have brought back, and they are all written to dish up rows that needn't happen if people's minds weren't as stuffy as mouldy cupboards. Evangeline's is like a wide open door, you know; she is not at all stuffy; but she wants so much to have everyone enjoy everything they can that she took on the idea of women being oppressed, and of course, wanted to help to let them out, as she thought. That is true, isn't it?" she turned to Mrs. Vachell.

Mrs. Vachell shrugged her shoulders. "It is true as far as it goes," she said. "Yes."

"Well then, you know Evan Hatton, don't you," Teresa continued. She had forgotten her anger against Mrs. Carpenter, and was trying to tell the story as if she were in a Court of Justice, presenting Evangeline's case and Evan's as one against the world. "He is not so naturally anxious for everyone to be happy. In fact he doesn't mind whether they are enjoying themselves or not, so long as he thinks they are doing what has got to be done. He got really worried about her trying to undo all the doors and locks everywhere. I think he got a sort of panic about it; as if she would or could possibly have done any harm! Anyhow, he thought it was the thing to do, so they had it out; that is all. And now he is coming back. They hated being away from each other, and he is going into Mr. Price's engineering place, a new one he has started near London. Now aren't you sorry you helped to make people think there was some nasty, frowsy mystery?"

"That is nonsense, dear Teresa," Mrs. Carpenter protested. "You ought not to let yourself run away

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with such ideas. But I am more than delighted it is so simple as you say. You know Mrs. Trotter had quite a different impression, and I must say Evangeline talked to her a good deal when you were all together that summer."

"Yes, that is what she does," Teresa admitted regretfully. "She talks to everybody as if they were all straight and decent, and she doesn't realise what worms some of them are. Of course they just mix whatever she says with slime."

Mrs. Carpenter gave the little laugh which she used to express offence. "Hardly flattering to her audience, is it?" she said.

"No, I didn't mean to flatter them," said Teresa. "They can do that for themselves when they have finished. "I was telling you how it looks to me when I know how Evangeline loves all sunny and kind things."

"I hear you are going to be married and give up all your work," said Mrs. Carpenter. "I must congratulate you and I hope you will be very happy. Aldwych is a lovely place and David Varens is quite delightful I think. You find you can't keep on with your poor people, don't you? With so many new interests, I daresay it is not easy for young people to think of others."

"Yes," said Teresa, her cheeks glowing. "But you know you will never make anything different out of Mrs. Potter, any more than I have."

"Who is Mrs. Potter? I don't remember her," asked Mrs. Carpenter.

"There are some people called Potter in that long street—Boaling Street—just by Emma's office;

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but I don't mean them alone. I was thinking of them as a class, and I forgot you didn't know them. I don't think either you or I are any good to them. They laugh at you for thinking you are wiser than they are, and they think I am mad because I keep on supposing they are feeling the same things as I do. Emma understands everything they say and is never surprised, nor ever tells them anything about herself, so they think she is perfectly normal and never suspect her of being a lady. She is just 'The lady at the depôt,' like the girl behind the counter is 'the young lady in the shop.' They go to her when they want sensible things, and I don't suppose they have any more theory as to why she is there than they have about any official. They probably think she is paid by the Government."

"And you are really sure you are not going to keep it up, even twice a week?" said Mrs. Carpenter. Then, without waiting for further answer, she changed the subject. "By-the-bye, Mr. Vachell, can you tell me what the Sphinx really is? Someone was asking the other day, and I said you could tell us if anyone could."

Teresa excused herself and went away, depressed by what had happened. She felt crushed by the weight of the heaviest burden that society brings, the failure to impress a living thought on a dead comprehension. She had offered sincerity, and been met with the corpse-like hand of offence.

"Both those Fulton girls have been very much spoiled," said Mrs. Carpenter, when she had shut the door.

When Teresa got home she found David sitting

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stiffly in a chair beside Susie who was knitting a small coat for her grandchild. There had been a conversation between them which it may be worth recording, and Teresa arrived at a critical moment. Susie's knitting was a curious performance, and David, sadly at a loss for an occupation while he waited for Teresa, had watched it and wondered in what way it differed from his mother's. Lady Varens at work with needles suggested Penelope filling in time to avert the intrusion of emotions. Susie evidently undertook the thing as part of the equipment of a rôle. It was like all household affairs performed by stage characters, the dusting of a room by a saucy maid who flicks the mantelpiece twice and then gets on with her lines, the dinner-party where everything is swept away after the first morsel of fish has been tasted. Susie's knitting was the "business" connected with the rôle of "Mrs. Fulton; beautiful, refined, well-dressed, awaiting the eventide of life with the calm philosophy of one who has known much suffering." She was now "discovered seated, centre R.f., expecting the return of her husband, a typical twentieth century rake."

"You do a great deal of knitting, don't you?" David remarked at last.

"Not as much as I should like," said Susie. "I hope that when you and Dicky are married you will encourage her to do something of that kind in the evening. If she is giving up all her other work she will need something to take its place. You don't sing or play at all, do you?"

"No," he said, feeling some apology was needed, "I don't."

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"I almost think I should take up some interest if I were you," she said gently. "Of course there is no doubt that there is no happiness like being married if people understand each other, but at the same time it is impossible not to feel the need for change of thought sometimes. You are not fond of wine, are you, David?"

"No, not at odd times, thanks very much," David replied. He was mildly startled by the question and wondered what she was driving at.

"And no more is Dicky. She never cared for it at all, and yet Evangeline would always take a glass when it was offered her. It gives people quite a different outlook. I don't know how far you have studied Dicky's character but I understand her, in a way, better than Evangeline. Dicky takes a much wider view of spiritual things."

"Yes, I expect so," said David, polite and non-committal.

"And just for that reason I am a little sad at her giving up all her work among the poor. I am afraid she will feel the want of it." David was struck dumb, so she went on, supposing his silence to be due to a wish to hear more. "She has no artistic interests, you see. When I was her age I had a great many. I was devoted to music, for instance, and if I had not fallen in love with my husband the course of my life might have been quite different. I hope you will forgive these little bits of personal history, dear David, but I should be so glad if they helped you in any way to clear up difficulties that may come when the 'first fine careless rapture,' as I heard it described the other day at a wonderful lecture of Professor Gaskie's—I

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thought of you two at once—when that is over. I felt it so much when I had to give up all that side of things when I married. You see my husband has his wine, for instance, and his men; he had a great number of old friends when we first married, whom I must say, I thought extremely uninteresting. They talked by the hour about foxes; not in connection with all the beautiful country life that you have, for he never hunted except when he was asked to stay with people, but they were always talking about that kind of thing. Some of them were purely politicians and some very much worse. Not the old intellectual type like Disraeli, who really cared for beautiful things, but the sort who run away from a drawing-room and hide themselves somewhere with decanters and laugh and roar and sing half the night. I can't tell you how much I used to feel the want of something else. Then the children came, and of course it was all right, and I had friends who were very kind, so that I could go now and then and hear music and talk about the things I cared for. That is why I have taken up the work I do here. It is not an intellectual place, as you see; and those concerts! Have you ever been to them?"

"Yes, sometimes," said David. "I thought they were supposed to be rather good."

"The performers are often very good," she agreed, "but there is an atmosphere about the place that I don't like; a want of appreciation. Have you noticed that there is often quite a fog in the hall? I have wondered sometimes whether it was anything like what Professor Bole was describing the other day. I forget how he put it, but I thought of those

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concerts and wondered whether people's tastes—their love of rich dinners and wine and all that, had been chased out of them by the music and was wanting to get back and preventing them from hearing if fully. Dear little Dicky used to find the fog in the town so depressing when we first came, and I expect she felt the same as I do. Now Evangeline is different altogether, more like her father. She will throw off anything of that sort in a minute and be all ready for a gallop or a dance or party. Haven't you noticed that? And yet I always think any art is such a happy thing. One has no real need of other people——" Her knitting had gone down on to her lap long ago.

"No, perhaps not," said David.

"I am so glad you think so," she continued in her purry voice. "For of course, you will be a great deal cut off in the country. What is that Mrs. Lake like whom I used to meet now and then? She seemed to have quite taken up the Prices. She is very typical of the society round there, isn't she?"

"I don't know much about her," said David. "But I believe she is all right."

"Dicky will find friends, of course," said Susie. "One can always find some good in everybody if one is prepared to look for it."

"Yes, I don't think there will be any difficulty," said David.

"What do you think about Evan going into this business of Mr. Price's?" she asked.

"It ought to be quite easy I think," he answered. "It is what he likes."

"Yes, but Evan does like such curious things,"

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said Susie. "His is a most interesting nature; so upright; but I often wonder how Evangeline, with her very sunny disposition, chose anyone with such very strong religious views. Religion always seems to me to be a thing that should be so helpful in making it easier to stand up against things that go wrong. One sees so much suffering in a place like this that unless one can be sure that it is all intended and for the best, one would be inclined to dwell too much on it. Now Evan, it seems to me, instead of seeing it like that, often makes it sadder by supposing things to be worse than they are. He used to take the gloomiest view of poor little Ivor in his childish naughtiness, though he is really a good little boy and very obedient if one just smooths over diffieulties with a little tact. Nurse is not always very wise with him. She goes on persisting at the time, instead of waiting until he has forgotten and letting him do whatever it is of his own accord, when he is interested in something else. That is Evan's mistake I am sure. He is always on the look out for sad things and it makes him so difficult to interest. Now my husband is all the other way. He won't believe that anything matters, and I think that Evangeline is rather like him. They have no sympathy for any aims beyond the present. Do you know Mrs. Vachell well?"

"Not very," David replied.

"Do you like her?"

"I don't think she wants people to either like or dislike her, so I haven't got so far," he said. He would have been candid with Teresa or Evangeline or many other people, but he had a deep-rooted distrust of Susie as a receptacle for words. They

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meant so little to her that she was liable to pass them on as coinage in conversation and give no goods of her own in exchange, so there was no bargain that she was likely to respect between her and whoever she talked to. He felt this instinctively and had no dealings with her, not being willing, like Cyril, to declare himself bankrupt for the joy of riotous living.

"She believes very much in women," Susie went on. "Her idea is that some day all those things that I was talking about, the love of finer tastes and of children, and all the confidence and dislike of harshness and ugliness that woman feels so much will come more to the front and have more influence. There may be something in it, for although I dislike the idea of women going into the world, still, if they can do any good I am sure it is right for them not to hold back; for the sake of the unmarried ones who have to earn a living. It does seem terrible, don't you think, that there should be no way for those who are not intellectual to live except by pleasing men in the wrong way; because that is what it comes to, whether they are married or not. And if they are not good looking it is even worse. They ought to be as well paid for cultivating the higher side of life as for pandering to the lower. A loving nature is of as much value to the world as a brain that invents war material; and, as it is, men only use it as a toy for every sort of coarser instinct."

"But does Mrs. Vachell suggest a sort of spiritual —market?" David asked, hesitatingly, roused at last out of his burrow by the logical enticements that Susie had been aiming at him. "Aren't

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there enough people who sell themselves in that way already ? "

" I don't think you have quite understood my point, dear David," she replied, and at that moment Teresa came in and found them.

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CHAPTER XXIII

TERESA and Joseph Price were going back to Millport together in the rickety little train that joggled up and down the coast every few hours. Teresa had spent the day with the Varens' and Joseph had called about tea time with some information from his father for Evangeline about her husband's new work. Evan was expected in about ten days, and was to take up his work at first under Mr. Price's own eye before being entrusted with the final appointment at a distance. Joseph and Teresa were each occupied in trying to hold an evening paper still enough in the dim light to read the last news of a riot that had broken out in the Midlands over a labour dispute. They had hardly deciphered more than a few lines when the train wriggled itself to a standstill, and Mr. Fisk junior jumped into the carriage. He threw himself down in a corner and took some papers from his pocket and then recognised his companions. "How do you do?" said Teresa. "I don't think you can see anything by this lamp. We were trying to read a paper, but it is no good."

"How d' you do, Fisk?" said Joseph. "Been playing golf down here?"

"No," said Mr. Fisk, frowning. "What I have been doing is a game to some but deadly earnest to others. If it ends in bloodshed the responsibility will lie with those who treated it as a game." He

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settled himself into his corner and glared at Teresa.

"Kait sairysly, though, Fisk, what d' you think of this?" Joseph asked, tapping his paper. "D' you think it 'll come t' anything, what?"

"It has come to something already," said Fisk, "as you will find if you study your newspaper. And it will come to something that you have not yet experienced, the search for a crust of bread by those who have treated the misery of their fellow creatures as a game."

"Yes, but you know, that won't do any good," said Joseph. "Somebody's got t' hold the purse, or the money 's bound to get lost. That's been gone into pretty thoroughly. You and I can't decide the thing 'n a railway carriage, like this. Now I'll tell you a thing 's an instance. My father, the other day, was thinking of buying a big place—since you've turned us out—" he added politely to Teresa, "and I said t' him, 'Don't. I don't want the thing. In a year or two's time we shan't have a soul left t' talk to. All the f'llers we know will be in trade or driving their own engines and so on, and the people at the top will be the sort that nobody c'n ask out and all that. 'T's abs'lutely not done,' I said, ' 't's played out.' Th' only thing t' do now, 'f you want to be in it, is t' cover yourself with grease and get up at th' most ungodly hours. Th' old aristocracy won't look at you if you offer them a really decent dinner. At my club th' other day, I met a f'ller ordering tripe and onions; 't's a fact."

"Oh, don't be so stupid," said Teresa angrily. "You can't always go on shifting from one branch to another as soon as anyone else sits down on yours.

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All people want is to be let alone to do anything they are able to do, and it is snobbery like yours that makes it impossible."

"No, no, really, I assure you," Joseph protested. "That's not Fisk's idea, I'm sure, is it?" He appealed to the indignant spectacled form opposite. "What? I heard about you th' other day, you know. I was down canv'ssing your way for my father and turned up 't your house. Your father gave us his vote—'t's a fact, abs'lutely—because he said he was f'd up with socialism. 'My son's one of them,' he said, 'and he won't work, and he objects t' me and my wife working.' Now there's snobb'ry for you 'f you like, I think, what? I'm willing t' associate with people who won't associate with themselves. What are you t' do?"

"My father knows nothing about economic questions," said Fisk, with dignity. "He has been ground down to the level he is at now, but he has never been below into the pit from which a class must either become submerged or rise above the one that is holding it down. They may rise through blood——"

"Oh, do stop, Mr. Fisk," Teresa implored him, "I believe England got on a lot better when people only argued at elections and went on with things in between. But look here. Will you tell me what you get paid for stopping people working and I will find you something to do where you shall get the same for being of some use. I have promised to find someone who will give their whole time to doing properly what I did so badly in scraps for Miss Gainsborough. You have had an education which I haven't, and you have much longer legs——"

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"No, pardon me, I don't approve of palliative methods," said Mr. Fisk.

"Well, you won't argue any more till we get out, will you?" asked Teresa. "How are the dormice?"

He launched into the subject with enthusiasm. He forsaw a great future for dormice in the field of knowledge when their habits had been studied more. After he got out at the next station Joseph remarked:

"Kerious sort of f'ller, isn't he? Typical of a kind that's dying out, I b'lieve. In a year or two you'll find that sort of thing'll hardly be done at all. Abs'lutely the latest thing already is t' work at something and it'll come in, you'll find, and then everybody'll want to do it for a bit. Fisk'll be as jealous as poss'ble when he finds someone else has collared his little shovel and his paint pot and all that, and that there isn't any loose money about to pay him for talking. It's a very kerious thing how 'n idea gets out 'f date. I don't know if you're interested in morals and all that?"

"Go on," said Teresa, "I shall be grateful if you will make me really cross with you."

"How's that?" inquired Joseph.

"It is like a sneeze that won't come off—but never mind; you have worked me up into an explosion sometimes. What were you going to say?"

"I said I didn't know if you are int'rested in morals; because I b'lieve very strongly that illicit love affairs and all that sort 'f thing's going t' be frightfully stale, what? Don't you think so? Of course it'll go on happ'ning; you can't prevent it; but people will have t' run the risk of being thought

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middle class. I'm fairf'lly bored with th' idea of sex, myself, aren't you ? "

" No, I must say I am glad there are two," said Teresa. " But then I am ' fairf'lly bored,' as you call it, with the idea of anything being ' middle-class.' Perhaps that is newer still. I hope not for your sake. However, in the meantime I am ever so grateful for what you have done for Evan. My sister is so happy about having him back and that he is going to do something he will like so awfully. I hope it won't bore your father, having him there."

" Oh no, my father's never bored," said Joseph. " That's really th' thing about him that bores me sometimes, 'f you know what I mean."

The train stopped for the last time and Teresa got out into the brightly-lit station. Outside it there was semi-darkness, and the mud dripping imperceptibly. Along the slimy pavements three or four of the little boys to whom she had ladled out hot-pot and plum-pudding ran to and fro, shouting the latest news. "—c'lock ' Echo '—special edi—shun ! six-o'clock—' Echo '—'clock—edi—shun ! ' Echo '—riots—in—Blankshire — forty-seven—persons—injured ! ' Echo '—edi—shun—serious-rioting—in Midland—town—forty-seven—'ere you are, sir.—'clock—' Echo '——" and away he sped. " I wonder if he has got any awfullness buttoned into his waistcoat for Grannie to-night," thought Teresa, " or whether she died——. Shall I ever be able to stand knowing that ' Grannie ' and the waistcoat are there and I am with David, and not doing anything ? "

" I met Joseph Price to-day," she said to her father

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when she got home. "He has really been very good about Evan. I believe he invented the whole idea himself. Mr. Price seems suspicious about it and wants to have Evan at the works here first, to make sure that he is all right. David says he is quite sure that he is in fact what is wanted, and there won't be any difficulty, as he keeps on saying, but how Joseph knew, or why he took the trouble, I can't imagine. He is such an absolute ass and yet he seems to pick up ideas and he makes the old man do just what he likes. He is also the greatest snob and time-server, and yet he will do anything or go anywhere for anybody for no reason. Fisk was in the train, raving about blood as usual, and Joseph said he was going to ask him to stay for a week-end and meet some of the people who are coming down about the election. Joseph will sit there quite undisturbed by his family and get any amount of amusement out of the fluttering in the dovecot there will be, and Lady Varens says that Mrs. Lake—the select Mrs. Lake—thinks he would make a nice son-in-law. She thought that he liked Lady Angela Brackenbury who started the inn, the Star and Garter. They wanted to have the Duke's Star and Garter framed as a sign outside. I am getting so muddled with them all. I couldn't go and live there if it weren't for David. Joseph told me he was bored with sex, so I suppose, as he can't find anything newer than a woman to marry, it won't be either of them and the Price money will have to go to anyone who marries the girls after Joseph has lolled about on it enough. It is distracting to ravel out."

"You've got an abnormal love of the social order," said Cyril. "You'd much better leave it alone

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and concentrate on your man. He'll repay it with far more gratitude."

"I don't want gratitude," she said. "It is just the Lady Bountiful idea that has annoyed me from the beginning. I want to feel one of a colossal family, that's all; not to be the housekeeper in the store cupboard or a cow being milked."

"Then you must put up with poor relations, and they're always a damned nuisance," said Cyril. "Your mother had a great love of humanity, she said, but her idea was more to be the head of a family of her own than to be mixed up in a general one. Gad! she used to rope them in, too! I never saw anything like it. And nothing about it of a grosser nature, like your friend Joseph. All pure, unadulterated love. It's a wonderful gift." He was lost in retrospect.

"Where have you wandered off to?" she asked in perplexity. "Mother had only two of us and you said once that she wasn't in love with you. I have thought over that sometimes, and I think you must be wrong. I don't mean to say you oughtn't to have said it, because I don't want nasty things covered up; I want them not to happen. But you were probably talking to the gallery that time, weren't you? People forget. Evan forgot a lot of things that Chips remembered afterwards."

"I wasn't thinking about anything at all nasty," Cyril replied. "There's nothing wrong with the instinct of the nesting season, and the number of eggs laid has nothing to do with it. The selection of a mate has also been sung by poets, so I have every right to use the comparison without being blamed by you. Chips is another of you loving

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ladies," he went on. "That makes three of you. What a trio for one man to keep under the same roof! No wonder that I give way sometimes."

"Chips loves the sun, with people thrown in as something that hatches out under it, I think," said Teresa. "There's not much actual family about it —though Ivor—goodness! You talk of birds! That is nothing to her. Do you know, I think she imagined she had hatched out the whole of creation at once when Ivor was born. And now she lives in him in a way, and doesn't mind how independent he is. She never wants to hold on to him or push him this way or that, like some mothers do. She forgets so easily what other people think, so long as they don't make obstacles and set them up in front of her."

"I daresay," said Cyril. "Your sex amuse me very much, and I am very fond of a great many of you. But I wish you didn't all think so much. It keeps one for ever tripping about for fear of disturbing a valued plan. That's a thing I detested during the war, having to make arrangements. You see a thing to do and you do it or don't. That's the only reasonable way."

About a fortnight later Evangeline went to London to meet Evan. They were to stay there for a few days while he went to see Mr. Price's engineering works. They were then to take rooms in Millport until after Teresa's wedding, and make arrangements for the future. There was not much money to spare for the moment, and Susie had urged Evangeline to economise by staying with them until Evan began to receive his new income. But the sisters decided between themselves that the sugges-

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tion held too many risks. "He does so hate being looked at," Evangeline had said, at the conclusion of her remarks on the subject in Teresa's bedroom one night.

"There is too much of what Father calls 'damned noticing' in this family, isn't there?" said Teresa. "And yet Mother never tells you she has seen anything; she only points out what someone else has seen. And Father never seems to see anything unless you ask him, and I don't spy round, but still I understand. I should hate not to be away with David. I am so glad we are going away into another continent before we end up among neighbours."

"But this isn't a honeymoon, so it ought not to matter," said Evangeline. "But I know you will all look so nervous if we disagree, and since the Vachell episode I feel that Evan will suspect the devil in every female eye he sees for a long time."

"Mrs. Vachell is the only person I know from whom I feel absolutely cut off," said Teresa. "I don't mean since the episode, but always. You and I have thought she wasn't human, but that is not true. She is fond—I mean fond really—of that little Vachell. He fainted one day at his lecture and was brought home in a cab; I don't know if I ever told you; and I happened to be there. She didn't say anything hardly, but you can't mistake. That is all I know about her. I think from something she said once that her father ill-treated her mother, but I am not sure. If you had left Evan I have an idea she would have carried the luggage—taken the blame and all that—and you would have kept Ivor even if she had to seduce Evan and all

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the jury, so if you come to principles——! She would have been burnt in the Middle Ages and Evan would have burnt her and been burnt himself. Isn't it a mercy there is nothing worse than Fisk to make opinions unpleasant in this country." The hour was very late and honest Robert's footsteps could be heard coming down the street. "Certainly no; certainly not," they said. But neither Teresa nor Evangeline was aware of him. "But I don't know her in the very least," Teresa added.

"I was a fool," said Evangeline, reflecting. "As if it mattered!"

"As if what mattered?"

"Whether Evan understood either her or me. Things come out in the wash. But it would be nice to live with someone whom one could say just anything to, instead of only being in love with them, wouldn't it? But I suppose that hardly ever happens."

Teresa didn't answer.

A day arrived when Evangeline stood waiting for the train that was to bring Evan. She was shivering and impatient, like a swimmer about to dive on a rough day; anticipating the joy of achievement and the thrill after stale security, but aware also of what would happen if she failed. The noise of the station was deafening; other trains came in, discharging crowds that pushed past her in their search for relatives and luggage. An engine let off steam close behind her and then thudded and puffed interminably, it seemed, until the noise added to her nervousness and the smell of smoke and the pushing of unlovely strangers gave her an utter revulsion against the thought of contending with

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Evan's sunlessness. She forgot everything except the weariness of contention. All of a sudden the platform was magically clear except for a line of porters drawn up at intervals along it. The engine was still screeching somewhere near and now a second one appeared before her in a rush of smoke and noise. The powerful movement of the axle, bringing the inexorable moment, was the only thing she noticed, and then she was fairly in the crowd, trying to remember what Evan looked like. She caught sight of him at last, standing a little apart, with a drawn, chilly expression of disappointment. She ran up to him, pushing porters and passengers out of her way and caught his arm. "Here——" she said breathlessly, "I'm here—I couldn't find you for ages." He smiled, and she began to feel ess at the mercy of events. He said something not very distinctly, that was drowned in a blast from the engine. She made a sign to him to look for his luggage, and after a time they drove away to the hotel. Poor Evan felt as though he had been washed ashore right into his own home after a shipwreck. He wanted to hear everything, to pick up lost threads of small events; to hear about this new job, and Teresa's marriage. Evangeline found plenty to talk about over their meal, but she was conscious all the time of the strength of the sea and that she would have to swim again presently. She longed for a sunny beach and warm blue ripples with no danger lurking in them. She was tired with excitement, and all her natural distaste for effort oppressed her with a wish that the man she loved were in charge of the situation, and not she. She wanted to bask in the certainty that nothing she

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could say would matter, and yet she knew that his face might cloud at any moment and become chilled by a chance slip of her speech.

. . . . .

The story ends at the Fultons' house a few weeks after this. Luncheon was over and Cyril had poured himself out a glass of port and pushed the decanter towards Evan. The Hattons were to leave Millport in ten days after Teresa's wedding and move into their new home. Even Mr. Price was satisfied that there was no hanky-panky about the appointment his son had made, and Evan's prospects were bright. He and Evangeline had been to lunch and the children were to go afterwards for a drive with Susie. David was also there.

"Well, here's luck," said Cyril. "Luck to marriage and all it may mean to a girl. Isn't that it, Sue?"

"I will drink the health in my cup of coffee, I think, dear," said Susie. "Hadn't you better send the wine down to this end of the table? David may like to reply with some idea that is a little brighter."

"I am not sure that I won't drink Mrs. Potter's health," said David. "May I, Dicky?"

"Yes, do," she said eagerly. "And you do really mean it, don't you?"

"Yes, of course I do," he answered. "Where's the difficulty?"

"No, there isn't any, I know," said Teresa. The door was pushed gently open and Ivor came in. Nurse stood in the doorway holding young Susan.

"I shall be ready in about twenty minutes," said Susie. "I must be at the bank before it shuts. Would you like to walk up and down a little, in the

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garden, Nurse, and get what sun there is till the car comes ? "

The little party went out and Evan got up to watch them from the window. " How they do wrap that child up," he observed to Evangeline. " Just look at the forest of shawls in that thing. I am sure it is not good for her."

" Oh, Evan," she said, wincing, " please, please don't begin over again. You may find the wheel of the perambulator is loose or something," she added hastily, to make her request sound like a kindly joke. She opened the window to say something to the nurse, and Strickland, who had come out into the garden, intoxicated with the atmosphere of nuptial gaiety, was heard carolling to the baby, as she pushed the perambulator up and down :

" It's a—long, long trail a—winding
Unto the—land of—my dreams——"

" I always think that is so true," said Susie with a little sigh.

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